MARY JANE
HER BOOK

CLARA INGRAM JUDSON

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Sally Roberts

To dear Sally on
her 9th Birthday
Loads of love
Joy
July 11th 1929.

Her little fists were clinched and even her perky plaid hair ribbon seemed to show amazement.

(Page 11) Frontispiece

MARY JANE HER BOOK

BY

CLARA INGRAM JUDSON

AUTHOR OF

"MARY JANE—HER VISIT," "MARY JANE'S KINDERGARTEN,"
"MARY JANE—DOWN SOUTH," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY
FRANCES WHITE

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Her little fists were clinched and even her perky plaid hair ribbon seemed to show amazement . *Frontispiece*

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MARY JANE—HER BOOK

THE BROKEN DOLL

MARY JANE stood on the curbstone and stared into the middle of the street. Her face was white with fright and the tears which had not as yet come were close to her big blue eyes. Her little fists were clinched and even her perky plaid hair ribbon seemed to show amazement.

And wasn't it enough to make any little girl stare? Her big, beautiful doll, the one that came at Christmas time, lay crushed and broken in the middle of the street! Its glossy brown hair matted in the dust; its

dainty pink dress torn and dirty and its great brown eyes crushed to powder!

For a full minute Mary Jane stared at the wreck that had been her doll. Then she turned and ran screaming toward the house.

Mrs. Merrill heard her and met her at the front steps.

"Mary Jane! Dear child!" she cried, "what *is* the matter? Tell mother what has happened!"

"My doll! My beautifulest doll!" sobbed Mary Jane, "my Marie Georgianna is all run over!"

"Surely not, surely not, Mary Jane," said her mother as she picked up the little girl and sat down, with her on her lap, on the porch steps, "dolls don't get run over."

"My doll did," said Mary Jane positively, "see?"

Mrs. Merrill looked out into the street and there, sure enough, was the wreck of the doll.

"Tell me how it happened, dear," said Mrs. Merrill and she gathered her little girl tighter in her arms as she spoke for she knew that if a doll had been run over, Mary Jane herself had not missed an accident by so very much for the doll and the little girl were always close together.

Mary Jane wiped her eyes on her mother's handkerchief, snugged cozily in the comfortable arms and told her story.

"I was going over to play with Junior like you said I could," she began (Junior was the little neighbor boy who lived across the street in the big white house), "and just as I got into the middle of the street I heard a big, *big* noisy 'toot-t-t-t-t' way down by Fifth

Street—and you *know*, mother" (and here Mary Jane sat up straight) "that you always told me if an automobile was as far away as Fifth Street it was all right—so I went on across. But this automobile didn't just come; it hurried fast, oh, so very fast and by the time I was half way across the road it was so close I just turned around and ran back to the curbstone and I was in such a hurry I guess I must have dropped my Marie Georgianna!"

"And the automobile ran over her, poor dolly," finished mother, with a thrill of fear as she realized Mary Jane's narrow escape. Then she wiped off the teary blue eyes and smilingly said, "Listen, Mary Jane, and I'll tell you a secret."

"A secret about a doll?" asked Mary Jane eagerly.

"A secret about a doll," replied mother. "Marie Georgianna has a twin."

"Not a really truly twin?" demanded Mary Jane and she sat up straight and opened her eyes wide. "A really, truly, for surely enough twin?"

"Yes, she has," said mother nodding her head emphatically, "a really, truly, for surely enough twin—I saw her down at the store only yesterday and I think we'll have to go down town and bring her home, don't you think so?"

"But how'll we go so early?" asked Mary Jane, for she knew that mother always liked to do her morning work before they went on errands.

"I think father is still here," replied mother; "you smile up your face and run around to the garage. I think you'll find

him there working on his car. If you do, tell him all about what happened and tell him he's going to mend your doll by finding her twin!"

Mary Jane slipped down from her mother's lap and hurried around the house toward the garage. As soon as she was out of sight, Mrs. Merrill went out to the street and rescued the wreck of the doll from the dusty road. Yes, Mary Jane was right when she said that the doll was all gone—it would take considerable work to put even the dress in order and the doll itself was broken beyond all mending. Hastily Mrs. Merrill pulled off the dirty dress and dropped the doll into the covered trash basket where Mary Jane would not see it again and be reminded of the accident.

"What are we going to do about that

speeding on our road?" demanded father as he hurried up to the back porch just as the lid was back on the trash basket. "Did you hear about Mary Jane's narrow escape?"

"We're going to do this about it," said mother positively, "Mary Jane isn't to go over to Junior's again by herself. If she has to go over, one of us will take her. And now the important thing is to find Marie Georgianna's twin. And Mary Jane," she added as the little girl came running toward the steps, "this twin of Marie Georgianna's is afraid of automobiles, very afraid of them, and she doesn't like to cross the street unless some grown up person is with her."

"That's a good thing," said Mary Jane with a big sigh, "because I don't like to either. Next time I go over to Junior's I'm

not going over. And what shall I name Marie Georgianna's twin, mother?"

"We'll decide that later," laughed mother; "you must hurry quick and wash your hands and face and slip on a clean frock so you can go to the store with father."

It doesn't take long to tidy a little girl who wants to help so it wasn't five minutes before Mary Jane was sitting, clean and tidy and straight, beside her father in the front seat of his automobile. She loved to get in while the car was still in the garage and then, when he backed it out, to hold the wheel while he locked the doors and climbed back into the driver's seat.

The Merrills lived in a charming home on the edge of a small city; a home surrounded by trees and garden and plenty of space for playing; and at the same time, only about

ten minutes' ride from the stores in the center of the city. So a very short ride brought Mr. Merrill and Mary Jane to the store where Marie Georgianna's twin was to be found. In the meantime, Mrs. Merrill had telephoned to the store and had told the saleswoman in the doll department just which doll to have ready for Mary Jane.

When Mr. Merrill and his little girl walked into the toy department, there, with her arms outstretched in greeting, was a beautiful big doll. For a moment Mary Jane said nothing—the doll was so like her dear, broken-to-pieces Marie Georgianna that she could hardly believe her eyes! She walked up close to the counter; looked hard at the doll and then exclaimed, "It is! It is, Daddah! It *is* a twin just as mother said it was! And is it for me to take home?"

Mr. Merrill assured her that the doll was to go home with them and then he asked about clothes. "Are you sure you have enough at home? Were the clothes spoiled too?"

"While mother was washing me ready to come down town, she told me she could fix the dress and Marie Georgianna didn't wear her hat when she was run over," said Mary Jane, "so I guess her twin doesn't need anything new." But she looked so regretfully at the cases of pretty clothes that father bought a pink parasol—"just for fun" he said.

"She doesn't want to wear *just* hand-me-down clothes of her sister's even if she *is* a twin," he explained, "and I always like to buy doll clothes for little girls who don't tease for new things. But there's one thing

sure about this parasol," he added, "it's not to go over to Junior's!"

"It won't!" laughed Mary Jane happily, "because I won't and parasols can't go places by themselves!"

All the way back home Mary Jane sat very still and held the new doll close up to her. Mr. Merrill thought perhaps she was thinking about the accident and tried to get her to talking—that shows how little even good fathers understand! Mary Jane wasn't thinking about any accident, dear me no! She was naming her doll.

Just as they got out of the car at their own front walk, she announced solemnly, "I've named her Marie Georgiannamore because a twin is more than one."

DON'T CRY OVER SPILLED SUGAR

ALL the rest of the day after Marie Georgiannamore came into the family, Mary Jane played dolls. Mother helped her fix a play house out on the front porch in the warm sunshine and there Mary Jane and her family had a very happy time. Evidently Marie Georgiannamore liked her new home for she seemed very content with the other members of Mary Jane's numerous family. There was the sailor doll and the rag doll, Mary Jane, Jr., and small bears and dolls and kewpies too many to count. And of course each doll had its own chair and bed so there was quite a household out on that sunny front porch.

When father came home in the evening he helped carry in all the furniture and in the morning he helped move it back again.

"I tell you, Mary Jane, these moving days keep us husky and strong, don't they?" he said as he picked up three chairs and two beds at one time.

Mary Jane laughed and, just to show that she was strong too, carried out *three* doll beds (to be sure they were for the very littlest, two-for-a-nickel dolls but then they were three beds just the same) and a washing machine at one time! Then she thanked her father for his good help and he went to work and she settled down for a morning's house keeping.

About ten o'clock Mrs. Merrill came to the front door.

"Do you know any little girl who is big

enough to run down to the grocery and get me some sugar?" she asked.

"'Deed, yes, mother!" answered Mary Jane promptly, "I can bring you ten-fifty pounds! See how strong I am?" And she doubled up her arm as she had seen her big, basketball-playing sister do to show her muscle. "See? And I could move more beds at one time than Daddah could this morning."

"Well, you are strong!" exclaimed mother admiringly; "you have more muscle than you need for sugar getting because I want only three pounds this time. I'm making cake and pies and cookies and I've run out of sugar and don't want to leave my work to get more. Can you leave your family now?" she added, for she was always particular to treat Mary Jane's duties or play as politely as she expected Mary Jane to treat hers.

"Yes," replied Mary Jane, "I can go this very minute, mother, because all my children are taking their morning nap. Do I have to dress up?"

"Not a bit!" laughed mother; "just go down to Shaffer's at the corner then you won't have to cross any street. Here is the money and here is the paper that tells what you want—three pounds of granulated sugar. Thank you for going, dear."

Mary Jane tucked the slip of paper and the money into her pocket under her handkerchief, kissed her mother good-by and ran down the walk.

It didn't take long to do the errand because she ran right by her friend Doris's house without even stopping to call "Hu-uu-oo!" as she usually did; and because Mr. Shaffer seemed to have been expecting a call for three

pounds of sugar—he had the parcel all ready.

On the way back Mary Jane looked longingly into Doris's house and there, sure enough, her little playmate was standing on the front porch.

"Come on in!" called Doris.

"Can't now," answered Mary Jane; "I'm doing an errand for mother, a real important errand," and she held the package of sugar tightly in her arms and walked straight along.

Now whether the paper in the bag was not very good to begin with; or whether Mary Jane held the parcel too tightly or what—it would be hard to say—but—Mary Jane had not gone five steps past Doris's house before she felt a funny little movement in the bag under her arm. She looked and what do you suppose she found had happened? That

sugar bag had sprung a leak. Yes, a really for sure leak and the sugar was dribbling, dribbling down to the sidewalk! Quick as a flash Mary Jane turned the bag other side up and stopped the leak but, even so, there was a little white mound of sugar there on the sidewalk.

"I wonder what I ought to do now?" she said thoughtfully. "Should I pick up the sugar and put it back into the bag?" She tried that, but she soon found that sugar is very slippery. She could pick only a few grains at a time and even some of those few slid out of her hand before she could tuck them into the leak in the bag. It was very puzzling. She bent low over the pile of sugar and in that way she was hidden from the houses by the high hedge that grew along the walk.

"I wonder, I wonder—" she said, and then she noticed that she had company. Two busy ants had found that pile of sugar and were moving it away as fast as ever they could. "This must be moving day for them too," said Mary Jane laughingly. "I wonder where they are going? I guess I'd better see."

She sat down beside the pile, being very careful to hold her bag of sugar leaky-side up, and watched and watched. If you have ever seen ants moving grains of sugar you know how very interesting it is and you won't wonder that she forgot all about taking the parcel home to her mother. And there is no telling when she *would* have remembered if she hadn't, just then, heard her mother's voice.

"Mary Jane! Mary Jane! Mary Jane!" called Mrs. Merrill.

"Coming, mother," answered Mary Jane and she scrambled to her feet and hurried home. "'Cuse me, mother, for being so long," she said breathlessly, "but it leaks and please may I go back by Doris's and see the ants?"

Mrs. Merrill took the bursting bag and thanked Mary Jane for the errand. Her mind was on her delayed baking and she thought Mary Jane meant to go to see Doris's aunt. So, without a question, she replied, "Yes, you may, dear, but don't stay too long." And so Mary Jane ran back to her ants.

By careful watching she found where they were going. They had a whole colony of

tiny holes out in the grass plot between the sidewalk and the curbing and they seemed to be moving the sugar into these holes.

"I think I ought to help them, they're such little things," said Mary Jane to herself, "and I think Doris would want to help them too." She went to Doris's gate and called and her little friend came out to watch ants too.

"See what they are doing?" explained Mary Jane. "They're moving the sugar into their pantry and we ought to help them like my father helps me when I move my doll house things."

But somehow the plan which sounded so well, didn't work. Maybe the ants didn't understand that help was being given them; for really, the more the little girls "helped" the more scurrying and confusion there was

in that company of ants. And even when Mary Jane picked up a grain of sugar and actually dropped it into a hole ready for them to put away, that didn't seem to be the right thing either!

Just then, when the little girls were getting tired of bending over so long and trying to do something that didn't work, the noon whistles began to blow, and, a minute later, Mr. Merrill came riding by in his car.

"Do you know where I could find two little girls to ride around to the garage with me?" he asked as he pulled up by the curbing.

"Right here they are," cried Mary Jane and she and Doris climbed into the car in a jiffy.

"What were you people doing there on the sidewalk?" asked father as they drove around the corner.

"Helping ants store sugar in their holes but they didn't like it," said Mary Jane disgustedly.

"I don't blame them," laughed Mr. Merrill. "When we get into the house I'll show you how those holes are made and then you'll understand why the ants didn't want help." So Doris came into the house too and Mr. Merrill got down a big book and showed the two girls pictures of ant houses and told them all about how ants make their homes and store their food.

"My, but I'm glad that sugar bag leaked!" sighed Mary Jane when the big book was finally shut up and put away, "because I had fun watching the ants; and I was out front ready for a ride; and now I've had a story—all because sugar spilled! Mother, is lunch ready? May Doris stay? We're hungry!"

HELPING THE ROBINS

ALL the afternoon after she learned about ants and their ways, Mary Jane was very quiet. Mrs. Merrill thought perhaps she was disappointed because Doris had had to go home right after lunch so she tried to be very sociable and kind to make up for the absent playmate.

"How would you like to make a new dress for Marie Georgiannamore?" she asked.

"Make it now, instead of taking my nap?" asked Mary Jane who sometimes disliked the hour of quiet that her mother had her take every afternoon. Of course she didn't really nap, that is, sleep; girls as big as she didn't need to Mrs. Merrill thought. But she did have to stay quietly in her own room and

look at pictures or rest which ever she wished to do. Usually Mary Jane enjoyed the hour but sometimes she wished she could play straight through the day.

"Oh, no," replied Mrs. Merrill smiling, "you will want to take your rest the same as you always do. But when you get up, then we'll make Marie Georgiannamore a new dress."

"And while we're making it," asked Mary Jane, "will I have to stay in the house?"

"Why, of course, Mary Jane," replied Mrs. Merrill, "how funny you are! You wouldn't enjoy my making a doll dress while you were out doors, would you?"

"No-o-o," said Mary Jane doubtfully, "maybe I wouldn't. Only I 'pect I'd like it after it was done."

"Well," said Mrs. Merrill laughingly, "if

you don't want a doll dress any more than *that*, you don't want one very badly—that's certain! You run along up to your room now and then, after you're dressed, I'll take my bag of darning out on the front porch—I think it's plenty warm enough to-day—and you may play in the yard. Would you like that, dear?"

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Mary Jane, "that's just what I want to do. And may I take the ant book upstairs?"

Mrs. Merrill said she could and helped her pull the big book out from the shelves.

"If this is what you are going to look at," she said as she handed the book to Mary Jane at the foot of the stairs, "better fix some pillows real comfy fashion in the window seat where the light is good." And Mary Jane promised she would.

The book proved more than usually interesting and Mrs. Merrill had to call the third time before Mary Jane heard her and realized that her hour was up.

"Wash your face and put on your pink smock, dear," called Mrs. Merrill, "and then come out to the porch. There's a robin in the front yard and you'll like to watch him."

Mary Jane scrambled her very fastest, which was pretty fast as you can guess, and in about three minutes was out on the porch inquiring for the robin.

There he was, big as life and busy as could be hunting his afternoon tea.

"Doesn't he know it isn't time for dinner till Daddah comes home?" asked Mary Jane.

"He doesn't pay much attention to time," laughed Mrs. Merrill, "he likes to eat all the

day long. It makes no difference to him whether he eats in the morning or afternoon."

Mary Jane watched him curiously as he pecked and dug and then she suddenly exclaimed, "But he didn't eat it, mother! I know he didn't eat it! I saw him fly away with it!"

"Then I expect he's carrying it to his babies," said Mrs. Merrill.

"Where are his babies?" demanded Mary Jane as she sat down on the porch step to hear more.

"I'm sure I don't know, dear," said her mother. "I didn't notice which direction he went, did you?"

"Yes, he flew around toward the back yard," answered Mary Jane quickly, "I saw him. Does his whole family live in a nest

like you've told me about or does he have a hole and a city and everything like the ants in the book?"

"His whole family live in one nest," replied Mrs. Merrill, "the father robin and the mother robin and all the little robins—sometimes several of them. It's pretty crowded perhaps, while the robin babies are growing, but they like it. I expect if you go around to the back yard and watch, you may see what tree Mr. Robin goes to with his worms. That will tell you what tree his nest is in."

Mary Jane ran around to the back yard and that was the last Mrs. Merrill saw of her till she called her to get ready for dinner some time later.

Mr. Merrill was late to dinner, but when

he came Mary Jane asked him all the questions that her mother had been unable to answer.

"Wait a minute!" exclaimed he. "Where did you see this robin that you're talking about?"

"In the front yard and in the back yard," said Mary Jane, "both of them."

"Then I'll venture to guess that it's the very same robin whose nest I discovered this morning," said Mr. Merrill. "I meant to tell you about it but was in such a hurry to get away I forgot."

"Oh, did you see his nest?" exclaimed Mary Jane excitedly; "his really truly for sure nest, Daddah?"

"That I did," replied her father, "and I'll show it to you."

"Let's go now," cried Mary Jane. "Won't you please excuse us, mother?" And she slipped down from her chair.

"Too late now," said her father, "might as well climb back and finish your dinner. You can't find a bird's nest after dark—and you can see that it's almost dark now. You wait till morning and I'll show you that nest first thing."

"As soon as I'm dressed, Daddah?" asked Mary Jane.

"Before you're dressed," promised her father, with a twinkle in his eye, "you just see!"

Mary Jane was so excited she could hardly go to sleep that night and Mrs. Merrill laughingly said that her dreams would likely be a circus of ants and robins. But she must have been mistaken, because little girls who

wake up as bright and early as Mary Jane did that next day, don't waste their nights a-dreaming.

"Daddah!" she called to her father in a loud whisper, "are you waked up? Daddah!"

"Um-m," said her father sleepily, "what is it?"

"Did you forget the nest," asked the little girl, "it's light now."

"To be sure," replied her father, who by now was wide awake; "put on your slippers and come over by my bed and look."

Mary Jane reached down from her bed, picked up her dainty slippers and put them on; then she threw back the covers and hurried over to her father's bed.

At the back of the Merrill home, upstairs, was a broad sleeping porch, sheltered by

wide eaves and completely screened. There, each in his or her own little bed, father and mother and Alice and Mary Jane slept every night. Of course each had their own room in the house, with a comfortable bed for day-time rests, and stormy nights and the like; but almost every night in the year all four of them slept out of doors. Just behind the sleeping porch was an old apple tree and it was to this tree that Mr. Merrill now pointed.

Mary Jane looked and looked and then, suddenly, she saw the nest! Set way back among the leaves it was and on it was sitting the mother bird.

"I expect the father bird is getting breakfast for the family," said Mr. Merrill, "and the mother is keeping the babies warm till they have something to eat. You better get

dressed now, little girl," he added, "but you may come up here after breakfast and I guess that, if you watch quietly, you can get a glimpse of the babies."

As quickly as breakfast was over, Mary Jane hurried back up the stairs to the sleeping porch and, sure enough, the mother bird and the father bird were both gone and those cunning baby robins—four of them—were stretching way out of the nest! Mary Jane almost gasped at first she was that surprised; but she didn't call out, no, indeed! She kept very still and watched—and watched. And the longer she looked the more certain she became that something was wrong.

"They do open their mouths so funny," she thought to herself. "I know, I just *know* they wouldn't open their mouths so wide if something wasn't wrong."

She thought a few minutes and then an idea occurred to her. The robin babies were thirsty—of course!

"I know how I felt that time we took too long a ride and I got thirsty," she thought, "and their mother don't know and their father isn't here either. I'll just *have* to get them a drink!"

But how to get a drink to four baby robins in the old apple tree—that was a problem that Mary Jane couldn't figure out all at once. But she didn't give up, no, sir! She thought and thought, and then she spied the hose lying in the back yard.

The very thing!

Quick as a minute, she ran down the stairs, out the kitchen door and over to the hose. Yes, just as she had hoped, it was attached and ready for use. She ran up to the house

wall, turned on the water (it took all her strength, but she didn't mind that), took one good look up at the apple tree to see just where the nest was, and then turned the hose that way.

But something didn't seem just right. Instead of liking it, and being very still because they were getting a good cold drink, those stupid robin babies chirped and cried and acted far from pleased.

"I know," thought Mary Jane, "they want it like rain," and she turned the hose nozzle high and straight so that the water would come down on the top of the nest.

But that wasn't any better or even as good as the first try; for the water, instead of coming down on the apple tree, came straight and wet onto Mary Jane herself! She was so startled that she screamed and dropped

the hose without a thought of the robins she had meant to help.

And then there *was* a commotion! Mr. Merrill, who had come home for some papers he had forgotten, came running around the house; Father Robin darted out from the hedge and made straight for his nest; Mother Robin hurried up from the pine tree in Doris's yard and Mrs. Merrill, tea towel still in hand, ran out from the back porch.

"What ever is the matter?" she cried.

"I was just giving the baby robins a drink," sputtered Mary Jane, "and they didn't seem to like it!"

Mrs. Merrill gathered her into her arms, wetness and all, and held her close. "I thought something had happened to my little girl," she said. "You must come in and get dry clothes on, dear; then I'll tell you more

about the babies and you'll understand why they don't like too much water."

"And *I'll* tell you something," said father. "If you like to learn about creatures and everything that grows, you meet me here at the back door step at five o'clock this afternoon and I'll tell you a secret."

"Oh, goody!" cried Mary Jane, as she clapped her wet hands. "Can't you tell it to me now?"

"I should say not!" said father importantly, "it's a secret! You'll have to wait till five o'clock!" And he hurried off to his work leaving Mary Jane to a day of wondering what might be coming—a pleasant sort of wondering, for father's secrets were always jolly ones.

FATHER'S SECRET

MARY JANE thought that five o'clock would never come—never! She looked at the clock and *looked* at the clock and she asked mother and Alice to tell her the time so as to be sure she herself wasn't mistaken in what the clock said. But finally lunch time was passed, and rest time, and then Mary Jane knew it wouldn't be very long till five o'clock.

"Now, I'm going to dress for my secret," she said when her rest was finished.

"That's just what I came to see you about," said Mrs. Merrill, who came into Mary Jane's room at that minute, "you'd better put on this little dress." And she held up a

little, old, dark blue morning dress—not at all the sort of dress that a little girl would wear to an afternoon secret, Mary Jane was sure of that.

"Why, mother!" exclaimed the little girl, "you don't mean me to wear *that!*"

"I surely do," said Mrs. Merrill, pleasantly; "it's just the right kind of a dress for this secret."

"But Daddah's secret is a *nice* secret," said Mary Jane positively.

"His secrets always are," agreed her mother.

"And nice secrets ought to have nice dresses," said Mary Jane.

"Nice secrets ought to have dresses that belong to them," corrected Mrs. Merrill. "We don't talk about things that are decided," reminded Mrs. Merrill. "Put on the

blue dress and come downstairs, Mary Jane. I'm sure you will be glad—when father comes home."

So Mary Jane put on the blue dress, but she wasn't very happy about it; she felt sure, certain all the time that she was dressing, that Daddah would be disappointed when he saw her. And she began to wonder if the secret *was* so very wonderful after all; it didn't sound so wonderful if an old dress went with it—in the afternoon!

But even though she was disappointed and a bit doubtful, she went down to the front porch and sat on the step where she could see father the minute he turned the corner of Fifth Street.

"Isn't this a fine day to be out of doors!" exclaimed Mrs. Merrill, contentedly. "See Mr. Robin out there, digging away for his

family? He has a hard time hunting worms in the grass. I expect he wishes we had a newly dug garden around this place." Mary Jane looked up indifferently, just in time to see a twinkle in her mother's eye. Did the twinkle have anything to do with the secret? Mary Jane wondered.

"What would he do with a garden?" she asked.

"Get worms out of it," answered Mrs. Merrill.

"But isn't he getting worms out of the yard?" asked Mary Jane, looking out to where the robin was industriously pecking at the ground.

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Merrill, "of course he is; but see how he has to work! Now if that yard was all dug up nicely for a garden, the worms would be plain to see and all he

would have to do would be to pick them out. Think how much easier that would be."

Mary Jane didn't answer. She looked out at the robin, but someway, she couldn't quite take an interest in his affairs; she was too busy thinking about her own secret and how disappointed Daddah would be when he saw that old dress.

And then, just as she was going to ask the time, she spied him coming around the corner. And she forgot all about dresses and remembered only the secret. Down the steps, along the walk and out to the street she ran, reaching the curbstone just as he pulled the car alongside.

"Hop in and ride around," he said, gayly. And then, as she climbed in he added, "Lucky you put that dress on. I forgot to tell you to be ready with something old. Now that you

are, we won't have to waste time changing."

Mary Jane stared. But seeing he seemed pleased, she said nothing about all her worries over the old dress.

"Do we have the secret in the car?" she asked.

"Dear me, no!" laughed father, "it's plain to see that you haven't guessed what it is. We'll put the car in the garage and then, while I slip on some old clothes to match yours, you may open that bundle in the back, there. It's part of the secret."

Mary Jane peered over the back of her seat at the queer looking bundle in the car. It was about as tall as she was, she decided, and bigger around than her two hands could reach and wrapped in brown paper and tied three times with very heavy twine. Now what could that be?

Father set her down in the garage and handed her the package and then hurried off into the house.

She tried to pull the strings off but they wouldn't pull; there seemed to be a bunch of the wrapping paper at one end and a hump inside the parcel at the other. So she decided to run in for mother's scissors.

But just as she got to the back steps, she met father coming out—it hadn't taken him long to get into old clothes, that was certain.

"Never mind about the scissors, Blunderbuss," said he laughingly, using a name he sometimes called her, "I'll take my knife."

Just three slashes of the sharp knife and the strings were off. Mary Jane opened the paper with shaking fingers, she was that excited. And what do you suppose she found?

A garden set—a spade and a hoe and a

rake all just the right size for a little girl to work with and so pretty and clean and new that Mary Jane knew that they had been purchased on purpose for her.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, clapping her hands and dancing around, "it's a garden! I know the secret now! It's a garden! That's what mother was trying to make me guess and I never thought! May I have one all my very ownest own?"

"That's the secret," admitted Mr. Merrill, "and the garden is for you only—just as long as you take care of it. Now you take your tools and I'll take mine and we'll see where this garden is to be."

They paraded out of the garage and over to where the last summer's garden had been. "I've been meaning to get at this for a week," said Mr. Merrill, "but I hate to work alone.

If you'll help me, we can have the finest garden ever. Now where do you want yours to be?"

Mary Jane looked around thoughtfully. There was the rose bed—she surely couldn't have that, it belonged to mother. And the asparagus bed, it was already showing shoots of green. "I guess I'll take next door to the rose bed," she decided promptly, "because I like roses. Can I dig it all myself?"

"Pretty soon," said father. "I dig first with the big spade. Then you dig with yours. Then I hoe it—I'll show you how when we're ready; and you hoe with your hoe." And he set to work.

"Then do the things just grow?" asked Mary Jane as she watched him.

"Not till we plant them," answered her father. "What are you going to have?"

"Worms for the robin so he won't have to work so hard," said Mary Jane promptly, "and a lot of flowers."

"I guess you won't have to worry about the worms," laughed Mr. Merrill as he turned over a big spadeful of earth, "Mr. Robin will find plenty—see? I'll make a guess that he's watching us from the apple tree this very minute! Suppose you run into the garage and look on the table there. You'll find packages of seeds. Bring them out here and we'll see which you want in your bed."

While Mr. Merrill gave the earth its heavy spading, Mary Jane got the bright colored seed packages and spread them out on the sidewalk. Then as she spelled out the letters, her father told her what each package contained. Lettuce and radishes and nas-

turtiums and carrots and candy-tuft and—

"Here's one that's me!" exclaimed Mary Jane suddenly. She knew a very few words and her own name was one of them.

"I thought you would find that," said Mr. Merrill, "so I bought that on purpose for you. It's Marygold and you may have it in your bed, if you like."

By that time the earth in her garden was turned and Mary Jane set to work spading and hoeing just as hard as ever she could. She worked on one side and her father worked on the other and very soon the earth was ready for planting.

"Now," said Mr. Merrill, "while I loosen the earth around mother's rose bushes, you make your trenches for the seeds." And he showed her just how it was to be done.

Mary Jane never felt so big, and grown-up

"Here's one that's me!" exclaimed Mary Jane suddenly.

and important in her life as when she made those trenches with her bright new hoe. She worked and worked till they were neat and even and exactly right. Then her father stopped his digging and together they opened three packages and planted the seeds. The nasturtiums went in front, because they were the smallest plants, father said; then the Marygolds that grow so straight and tall; and then, because father said every garden should have something useful as well as something beautiful, back of the Marygolds, a row of early lettuce.

Just as the last bit of earth was patted down over the last row of seeds, Mrs. Merrill called from the back door that dinner was about ready.

"And we're hungry enough to eat it, aren't we, Mary Jane?" asked Mr. Merrill. "You

put away your tools and run in and wash while I tend to my big ones and get myself ready. Let's see who's the quickest!"

How Mary Jane did hustle! She set her new tools in the far corner of the garage and then ran skipping into the house.

"Scrub your hands good, dear," said her mother as she hurried through the kitchen. "Wash your face and then run upstairs and get your blue smock and plaid ribbon. Dark blue dresses are the thing for gardening, but we like gay frocks for dinner, don't we, sweetheart?"

And yet, with all that washing and dressing, Mary Jane reached the table first—that just shows how fast she could hurry when she was racing with father. Or maybe it was because she was so hungry. For she had three

big helpings of her favorite mashed potatoes—think of that!

"First thing in the morning, know what I'm going to do?" she announced as she ate the last bite, "I'm going to get Doris to see my garden, she'll like my flowers, I know."

"You can get Doris," laughed her father, "but don't expect flowers in the morning. It will take them ten days to peep out of the ground. But don't you worry, you'll like to show Doris the garden before it grows."

"I will," replied Mary Jane, "I'll do it tomorrow."

MARY JANE PLAYS SCHOOL

"MOTHER, may I go over and get Doris this morning?" asked Mary Jane as she finished her breakfast. "I want her to come see my garden right away!"

"Not to-day," answered Mrs. Merrill. "Doris has the chicken pox so you will have to stay home for a while." And then she was called to the telephone so she didn't notice that Mary Jane ran straight for the window that looked out over Doris's yard.

"I think that's funny that I can't go over and see Doris's chickens," she said to herself rebelliously as she peered through the window. "I'm going to look, and look and *look*

till I see them anyway, so there! And then I'll telephone to Doris." She curled up on the window seat and watched and watched her neighbor's yard but not a sign of a chicken did she see. "I should think she would have to feed them now," she said to her big sister who was hurrying off to school.

Sister Alice didn't quite understand what Mary Jane said and was in too big a hurry to stop and inquire so she merely replied hastily, "Maybe you're too late for breakfast," and ran on to school. So Mary Jane still sat at that window and still watched for chickens. Finally when her legs were beginning to get pricky and she was about ready to give up, her mother came into the room.

"Where does she keep it?" asked Mary Jane.

"Where does who keep what?" replied

Mrs. Merrill, "and what is my little girl doing all this time?"

"I'm watching to see Doris's box of chickens," said Mary Jane, "do you know where it is?"

"Box of chickens!" exclaimed Mrs. Merrill in amazement, and then she suddenly realized how Mary Jane had misunderstood her. "Doris has no box of chickens, dear, she has chicken POX—it's a sickness and Doris will have to stay in the house for a few days."

"Oh-h-h," said Mary Jane slowly, "so that's why I can't play with her."

"That's why," agreed Mrs. Merrill, "and now what are you going to do?"

"I guess I'll play on the porch."

"I guess *not*," laughed mother, "because it's beginning to rain. I'm afraid you'll

have to play in the nursery. Why not play school?"

"I'm going to," replied Mary Jane, who always made up her mind very quickly. "I'm going to right now because Alice showed me how." And she skipped off gayly to the nursery.

There she pulled out every doll she had and set them in a long row on the floor.

"Marie Georgiannamore, you shall be lady-come-to-visit because you're the biggest and you are clean and new. I'll be teacher because I know the most. My sailor boy and Mary Jane, Jr., shall be the graduating class like Alice is and all the rest shall be the baby room."

Such a bustle and a hurry as there was after that! Mary Jane got out all her doll

chairs, every one, and set them in two rows —one for the graduating class (a very short row of two chairs) and one for the baby room (a very long row of many chairs). She dragged out her little piano to play the songs on and got out fresh chalk for the blackboard.

"There, now, I guess we're ready to begin!" she said and she sat down in the teacher's chair up front.

For a while everything went splendidly. The sailor boy must have known his lessons well for he received very good marks—right up on the blackboard where everybody could see they were, too—and the teddy bears sat up straight and minded the rule about no whispering. But the straighter the teddy bears sat, the more particular their teacher became about the others.

"Tommy!" she announced suddenly (Tommy was the sailor doll), "I should think you would be ashamed to sit so slouchy when this good little bear sits so straight—sit up nice now!" She picked up Tommy and sat him straight in his chair, oh, so very straight—that he couldn't sit still that way, he just tumbled off onto the floor!

"Tommy! I'm ashamed of you!" she said firmly. "Sit up!" And again Tommy was pulled up straight. But evidently Tommy didn't have as much back bone as a sailor boy should have, for he tumbled right down again.

"Tommy Merrill!" cried Mary Jane, now all out of patience, "I should think you'd be ashamed to have a teddy bear sit straighter than you do! I think I'll sit you up on" (Mary Jane looked around the room to see

where he had better be put) "on this radiator till you learn to behave." So, without giving Tommy a chance to explain that his back was made differently from the teddy bear's back and that he was sitting just as straight as ever he could, Mary Jane put him up on the radiator.

"There, now, you sit there for a while, Tommy, and if you're good I'll let you come down at recess time."

But as it turned out, there wasn't any recess in school that morning. Tommy had no more than been set up on the radiator before Mrs. Merrill called up the stairs to Mary Jane, who quickly dropped her piece of chalk and ran to the top of the stairs.

"Did you call, mother dear?" she asked.

"Yes, Mary Jane," replied Mrs. Merrill,

"come downstairs at once. Somebody is here to see you."

Mary Jane dropped the book and chalk at the top of the stairs and ran down as fast as ever she could—somebody to see her often meant a very good time and she didn't want to miss a minute.

"Dr. Smith," said Mrs. Merrill as Mary Jane stepped into the room, "this is my little girl, Mary Jane."

"I'm glad to know you, Mary Jane," said Dr. Smith.

Mary Jane made her very best courtesy; held out her hand and then looked up into the stranger's face and asked, "Why does she call you a doctor?"

"Why shouldn't she?" asked the visitor curiously.

"Because you're not a doctor," answered Mary Jane positively. "Doctors wear funny white coats and rub their hands together and say, 'Well, little girl, what can I do for you to-day?' doctors do."

Dr. Smith and Mrs. Merrill laughed and the doctor sat down in the big Morris chair and took Mary Jane in his lap.

"I'm sorry to disappoint any little girl," he said pleasantly, "but, you see, I'm on a vacation so I don't have to wear a white coat and ask questions. I can sit down in this comfortable chair and have a good time."

"Can you make Tommy behave while you are having a good time?" asked Mary Jane.

"Who is Tommy?" inquired the doctor.

Mary Jane told him all about the school and Tommy who had trouble sitting up as straight as the teddy bears did.

"I'm afraid I can't do much for Tommy this morning," said the doctor when she had finished, "for I'm only here between trains. But I'll tell you what you might do. You might pack Tommy and all the bears into a trunk and visit your great-grandmother. Then I could help you."

"My great-grandmother!" exclaimed Mary Jane; "she lives way off in the country!"

"To be sure!" nodded Dr. Smith, "and so do I—I live next door to her. That's the reason I came to see you. Now ask your mother to let you go home with me and then we'll have plenty of time to attend to Tommy."

"Oh, no, we couldn't think of that!" exclaimed Mrs. Merrill, before Mary Jane had a chance to say a word. "Mary Jane is much

too young to go so far from home without me and I can not possibly leave home just now."

Mary Jane looked from one to the other. A new idea, a brand new idea, was growing in her mind; the idea of making a visit—it had never occurred to her before.

"Does my grandmother live in a big house?" she asked.

"In a great, big, white farm house," replied Dr. Smith, "and she has lots of chickens and pigs and cows and strawberry patches and milk and—well, about everything a little girl could possibly want. And now she wishes a little girl named Mary Jane Merrill to come and visit her."

"And could I have really truly chickens of my own—not Doris's kind of chickens?" asked Mary Jane.

Mrs. Merrill laughed. "I guess you

could, dear, but you mustn't think about it because you are not going. I'm afraid you have made trouble," she added laughingly to Dr. Smith, "because when Mary Jane starts thinking about something, she doesn't easily forget."

"Never you mind, Mary Jane," said Dr. Smith confidently, as he set her down and prepared to go, "you talk about visiting your great-grandmother all you want to, and some day you'll get there—you just see!"

"Will I really?" asked Mary Jane after the guest had gone.

"Really what?" said Mrs. Merrill.

"Really go to my great-grandmother's where the chickens and strawberries are?"

"Dear me, I don't know," replied Mrs. Merrill. "I know you'll not go till you are way, ever so much bigger girl than you are

now—that's settled. Now run along with your school. I think Tommy needs you."

So Mary Jane went back to the nursery and played school. And being the kind of a little girl who knew it was not polite to tease, she didn't talk about the country—much. But she didn't forget—indeed, no! Not even when she was having a good time with the surprise that came a few days later.

AUNT EFFIE COMES TO VISIT

GREAT AUNT EFFIE lived way off in New York City, so far away that she had never before come to visit at Mary Jane's house. So, when one fine morning the postman brought a letter saying that in five days Aunt Effie would be at the Merrills, Mary Jane was quite excited.

"What does she look like and how long is she going to stay?" asked Mary Jane and then, before Mrs. Merrill could answer she added, "Will she like to play with me?"

"Don't ask me!" laughed Mrs. Merrill, "I have never seen her either. She's your Daddah's auntie, you know, ask him."

"That's funny," said Mary Jane, "How

can she be just my Daddah's auntie? Isn't she yours and mine too?"

"To be sure she is," replied Mrs. Merrill; "she's our auntie now but she was his auntie first and we haven't had a chance to see her since she belonged to you and me. When father comes home this noon you must get him to tell you all about the good times he and his brother used to have at her house when they were little boys. Then you will know that you will surely love her very much and that you'll want her to stay at our house a good long time."

When Mr. Merrill came home for lunch he gladly told her about many of the good times this same auntie had given him when he was about as old as Mary Jane.

So no wonder Mary Jane was interested in the coming of their guest. She helped

clean the guest room and all by herself fixed the vase of violets for the dresser. And then she put on her second best dress and drove with her father to the station to meet the unknown auntie.

Mr. Merrill locked the car and then he and Mary Jane went through the station and clear out to the tracks so they might see Aunt Effie the minute she got off the train. Pretty soon the great engine with its long trail of big Pullmans came snorting and puffing into the station; the porters stepped off the cars but not a single passenger appeared—except one small, lonely-looking little woman in black who climbed out of the last car.

"She didn't come!" exclaimed Mary Jane in dismay.

"Yes, she did, and here she is!" laughed father as he stepped up to greet the lit-

tle lady. "Welcome, Aunt Effie! This is Mary Jane come to meet you!"

Now Mary Jane had never seen her grandmother or any older auntie, at least she hadn't seen them recently enough to remember them because the Merrills lived many miles from all their kith and kin. So she was much puzzled at the little old lady and far too shy to do more than to drop a nice little courtesy as her mother had taught her to do. Then they all climbed into the car and drove home.

Aunt Effie was tired from her long journey so she didn't talk much that evening and Mary Jane went off to bed feeling not one bit acquainted with the auntie she had thought and talked so much about.

"I don't believe she likes little girls," she thought sadly. "I don't believe she even *saw*

me because when grown folks see little girls they always say, 'How old are you, little girl?' and then they say, 'My! my! you're almost big enough to go to school!' and she didn't say a thing to me!" And she went to sleep thinking about how fine it would be to have a really truly "play-with" auntie come to visit.

Aunt Effie hadn't come down to breakfast yet when Mary Jane had finished hers so she started playing all by herself. "I think I'll play dress up to-day," she said to her mother as she slipped down from the table.

"That will be fine," said Mrs. Merrill; "the attic is plenty warm and you can play up there all you like to, only you must remember to put everything away neatly when you have finished playing."

"I will, mother dear," answered Mary

Jane and she kissed her mother and started up the stairs.

Now up in the Merrill attic, off in a nice comfortable corner where it wouldn't be in any one's way, was the girls' "dress-up box." In it were kept all the clothes that Alice and Mary Jane were allowed to play with. There were old coats and wonderful old hats that were so queer one would never guess real ladies had worn them! And slippers and hair ribbons and petticoats and shawls and silk dresses and morning dresses and parasols and—oh, the most things you ever saw! Whenever Mrs. Merrill had something that she couldn't use any more and that wasn't worth giving away to some needy person, she put it in the girls' box. And whenever the girls, either Alice with her big girl friends or Mary Jane with her little play-

mates wanted to dress up or have a show they helped themselves out of the box—it was great fun as you can see. Many a morning when Mary Jane was tired of being Mary Jane, she slipped off to the attic and dressed up to be somebody else.

This particular morning she hardly knew what she was going to be. She pulled out a couple of gay hair ribbons, a pair of dark gloves and a shopping bag. And the bag decided the play for her.

"I'm going to be Aunt Effie-like-I-thought-she-was," she said gayly, "and I'm going to come and visit!" And then she set to work pulling stuff out of the box and hunting just the right thing to dress in. She finally put on a gay plaid skirt, a big black hat trimmed with a great pink rose, a yellow waist and a red scarf. Then she pulled on the pair of

gloves, picked up the shopping bag and started for the stairs.

And who do you suppose she met coming up? Aunt Effie! The real Aunt Effie!

"Well, good morning!" said the real Aunt Effie smilingly, "who have we here?"

Mary Jane looked long and carefully. She hated to take other people into her games and then find out that they laughed at her. And she had learned by experience that some grown folks never learn the game of "dress-up." But Aunt Effie, the this-morning Aunt Effie, whose eyes looked rested and smiling, seemed very much as though she might understand dress-up, very much. Mary Jane decided to try her.

"I'm Aunt Effie come to visit," she said solemnly.

"Now, isn't that nice," answered Aunt Effie and she didn't seem one bit surprised or amused or anything that grown folks sometimes are, "and who am I?"

"Oh, will you play too?" cried Mary Jane clapping her hands happily.

"To be sure I will," laughed the real Aunt Effie, "that's what I came upstairs for."

"Then you come over here by the box and I'll dress you up in some little girl things and you can be Mary Jane," said the happy little girl. "Do you like pink or blue sashes?"

Aunt Effie decided for blue and fortunately they found a nice, long blue ribbon and a white dress of Alice's that was just the thing. Such fitting and pinning and dressing and tying you never saw. And when it was all done, Aunt Effie looked so much like

a little girl that she couldn't help but act like one and she and the "dress-up" auntie played together all the morning long.

So much fun did they have that mother had to call twice to make them understand that lunch was ready!

"Here, you show me how you want things put away, Mary Jane," said Aunt Effie hastily when they finally heard. "Let's scramble them away so as not to keep mother waiting."

"We'll put them right on the top in the box," said Mary Jane, " 'cause we'll want to play some more—lots!"

And they did, many times.

KEWPIE AND THE WASHING

ONE morning a few days after the dress-up fun Aunt Effie had to go down town on some errands and Mary Jane was left to play by herself. She and her auntie had grown to be such good play fellows that it was hard to find something interesting to do without Aunt Effie to join in the fun.

"Why *don't* you find something to do and then do it?" said Mrs. Merrill after Mary Jane had made pictures on the window pane and rummaged through the mending basket and poked her finger into the canary's cage and fingered the forbidden little green balls on the ends of the fern leaves. "Little girls

can't expect to have a good time when they do all the things they are not allowed to do. Go and play with Marie Georgiannamore, you haven't played with her since Aunt Effie came."

"Will you play too?" asked Mary Jane.

"Not for a while yet, dear," replied mother, "because this is wash morning and I have a new laundress to look after. Didn't you see her come around the house when we were at breakfast? I have to go downstairs and show her how we like our clothes washed and starched. Don't you want to go along?"

"Oh, yes, mother, I do!" cried Mary Jane happily. "I want to learn to wash, too." Then she thought a minute. "But I believe I'd better take Marie Georgiannamore along too—she's lonesome."

"I'm sure she is," answered Mrs. Merrill.

"You run along and get her and then we'll go to the laundry."

Mary Jane hurried upstairs for her big doll, but, though she searched every place that a big doll ought to be, not a sign of Marie Georgiannamore could she see.

"Mother!" called Mary Jane over the front stair railing, "Marie Georgiannamore's lost!"

"Lost—no, surely not," said Mrs. Merrill and she started up the stairs to hunt for the misplaced dolly. "Oh, I remember now, dear," she added when she was half way up, "Aunt Effie took her clothes off to wash them and I expect the dolly is some place in her room. Get your biggest kewpie and come on, I can't wait too long."

Now Kewpie, the biggest kewpie, was the doll with the broad smile who slept with

Mary Jane every night. Other dolls got their hair mussed or their clothes untidied or something; but Kewpie could always be depended on to be neat and smiling no matter where he slept or what happened to him —a most satisfactory doll to take to bed as you can see. Mary Jane ran into her room to get him but her bed was all neatly made and Kewpie was nowhere to be seen.

"Kewpie's lost too," called Mary Jane.

"No, he isn't," laughed mother, who by that time was at the bottom of the stairs, "he must be right there, you had him in bed last night, you know."

Mary Jane ran back and poked her hand under the pillow; looked under the bed; on the dresser and on the window seat. No Kewpie was to be found.

"You'll find him in a minute," Mrs. Mer-

rill called up the stairs, "and then you come down and meet me—I'll be looking for you, dear." And then she hurried on to her waiting duties.

Mary Jane hunted and hunted but she didn't find Kewpie. She did find her rag doll tucked back in the far corner of the closet and she began playing with her and forgot all about Kewpie and the new laundress and even about her own lonesomeness with Aunt Effie away. She had such a good time dressing the rag doll in new clothes and going visiting with her and all that, that she didn't notice mother when she twice peeped into the door to see if her little girl was safe and happy. First thing Mary Jane knew, it was lunch time—you know how quickly the clock does run round and round when you are having a good time.

Now on wash day the Merrills didn't have their lunch on the dining table as they did on other days; no, because they liked to do different things and wash day is a very good day to be different. On that day Mrs. Merrill fixed a tempting little tray for each person and left all the trays on the kitchen table. Then each person as he or she came home, father and Alice and Aunt Effie (and of course mother and Mary Jane who were already at home, had trays too), went into the kitchen and got his or her own tray—the trays could be told apart by the napkin rings marked with initials—and carried it into the living room and sat down in a comfortable chair and ate lunch. And afterwards, each person carried his or her own tray back to the kitchen table. They thought that way of eating lunch was lots of fun and Mary Jane

well remembered how big and important she felt the first day mother allowed her to carry her own tray (with the glass of milk on mother's tray for safe keeping, of course) and to hold it on her own lap like big folks instead of sitting up to the piano bench like a baby! Mary Jane felt bigger that day than she ever had in all her life.

Just as she had picked up her tray and was going out of the kitchen on this particular noon, the new laundress came up from the laundry. Of course that wasn't so very unusual for Mary Jane often met the laundress in the kitchen at noon time, but it was unusual to have the laundress step up and lay something on her tray. Mary Jane had to hold tight to keep from spilling something she was so surprised!

"I guess this must be yours, little girl,"

the laundress said, "I found it in one of the sheets." And Mary Jane looked and saw —her Kewpie that she had hunted so hard to find.

"Oh, that must be my fault!" exclaimed mother. "I gathered the sheets up in such a hurry this morning that I quite forgot to look for Kewpie—I'm sorry!"

Mary Jane looked up at the kindly face of the new laundress, "Thank you so much," she said, "and I'm coming down to see you after I have eaten my lunch."

So as soon as she had lunched and had carried her tray back to the kitchen table, she hurried downstairs to the laundry. That new laundress seemed to know a great deal about little girls and to like them for she answered all Mary Jane's questions and told

stories and didn't seem to be bothered a bit by having a little guest.

"There!" she said finally, "I'm ready to hang out. Do you want to come along to the yard and hold the clothes pins?"

"I'll come pretty soon," said Mary Jane, and then she added importantly, "I have something I want to do first."

"Come along then, when you're through," answered the laundress unsuspiciously, and she picked up the heavy basket and went out of doors.

Left alone, Mary Jane slipped over to the wringer—that was the one thing above all others in the laundry that interested her and she did want to see how it worked. She turned the handle slowly three or four times, watching the cogs as she did so to see how

they fit into each other so neatly and then so quickly slipped out again.

"I do think that's funny," she said thoughtfully; "there must be something in there that makes them act so, I guess I'd better see what it is." And slowly turning the handle with one hand, she stuck an inquiring finger in between the cogs.

Of the few minutes that followed, Mary Jane never had a very good idea. She knew she must have screamed with the pain of a hurt finger because the laundress rushed in from the yard, mother came from upstairs and in a few minutes Aunt Effie hurried breathlessly down the stairs. Then, before long, the doctor was there too, and her finger was all tied up with sticks on each side and father hurried in the front door and asked her how she'd like a nice, long, Christmasy

stick of candy. It all happened just that quick.

"I think things is so funny," said Mary Jane later as she luxuriously licked her candy. "If Marie Georgiannamore hadn't hid and if Kewpie hadn't gone to the washing and if I hadn't wondered about that wringer thing, I wouldn't have had this candy that I've wanted for—for ninety-seven days."

"Yes," agreed the doctor as he went out of the door, "things is funny. And my advice to you, young lady, is this; next time you want to see how a wringer works, ask before you investigate. Another time you might lose, instead of bruise, your finger."

"I will," nodded Mary Jane, "only I don't want to know how it works any more—I know enough now, I do."

JUNIOR'S SHOWER BATH

IT'S very funny to go around the house with your finger tied up in a bandage and two strips of wood—that is, it's funny the first day. By the second day it's queer and after that it's no fun at all; it's a bother.

Long before Mary Jane was allowed to use her hand again she had decided that never, *never*, NEVER would she poke her finger into anything. It takes only a second to poke a finger in but it takes a good long time to get a badly hurt finger well, she had learned that.

For the first three days Aunt Effie played with her all the day long and that wasn't so bad. They played dress up and school and

Aunt Effie showed her how she had school when she was a little girl. And they made new dresses for all the dolls; and straightened the drawers of all the doll dressers and —well, they did every single thing that Mary Jane could think of or Aunt Effie could plan. And then, without a minute's warning a telegram came; a telegram which said that Aunt Effie must come home at once because her sister was sick.

And after that Mary Jane was lonesome, oh, so very lonesome and she couldn't think of half enough things to do to fill the days. For, you see, Mrs. Merrill had her duties and father had to go to his work and Alice had her school and Doris had the chicken pox so no one, much as they might have wished to, could spend every minute of the day with a little girl who was perfectly well except for

a hurt finger. That little girl had to play by herself a part of the time.

Mary Jane was standing by her mother's dresser, a couple of mornings after Aunt Effie left, when the cleaning woman came into the room to give it its weekly cleaning.

"Why don't you help here, Mary Jane?" suggested Mrs. Merrill; "you could dust my dresser things with your well hand and lay each thing, as you dust it, on the bed. Then I'll shake the dresser cover and Amanda will put the dust sheet on the bed and everything will be ready for cleaning in a jiffy."

If there was one thing above another that Mary Jane loved to do, it was to handle the pretty things on her mother's dresser. Ordinarily she wasn't allowed to touch a thing there, so she quickly replied, "Yes, mother, I'd love to help," and then took the dusting

cloth Mrs. Merrill handed her and set to work.

She dusted off the pin tray and the toilet water bottle and brushed the fringe of the lamp shade—she knew exactly what to do because she had watched her mother many times.

"There, now!" she said in a satisfied voice, "it's all ready for the cover cloth. Can you put it on, 'Manda?" Amanda Rice was the good cleaning woman who came every week to set the Merrill house in apple pie order; she and Mary Jane were fast friends.

"Jest a little minite, honey," replied Amanda, "soon as ever I gets this rain room clean."

Just off Mrs. Merrill's room was a tiny room which opened also into the bathroom and in this tiny room was a shower bath.

Amanda insisted on calling it the rain room because the water came down from the ceiling like rain; and she always seemed to have a fear that something about that room would hurt her. She was most particular to clean that room before she did either the bathroom or Mrs. Merrill's room—she seemed to want the bad job out of the way.

Perhaps when Mary Jane asked her to hurry with the cover cloth, Amanda hurried a little too fast with her scouring of faucets or perhaps she was just careless. However it happened, she turned on the cold water and it poured over her from the ceiling in an ice cold shower.

"Heavens! Honey! Lor' a mercy! De water hit me!" she shouted and she ran, dripping and screaming out of the shower room, out of the bedroom and down the hall.

Mrs. Merrill came hurrying to see what the matter might be and Mary Jane jumped to turn off the water before it should splatter out on the bedroom floor. And then, while Mrs. Merrill was busy comforting Amanda and hunting some dry clothes for her, Mary Jane sat down on the bed room floor to think. How funny Amanda had looked with the water running all over her clothes! Mary Jane, who had been used to a shower bath from the time she was a tiny little girl, had never before realized how funny it seemed to other folks. "I expect Doris would think it was funny," she thought. "I wonder if she knows about it. And wouldn't Junior look—" but Mrs. Merrill bustled into the room just then and Mary Jane had no more time for thoughts.

Mrs. Merrill worked rapidly to make up

for lost time. She shook the dresser scarf out of the window, brushed off the window seat pillows and finished making the room ready for Amanda. "Now, dear," she said to Mary Jane when everything was finished, "Amanda is coming in here to sweep, why don't you go out and play a while with Junior? See? He's out in the yard. If you play nicely, you won't hurt your finger, I'm sure."

Mary Jane didn't care much about playing with Junior just then; she would far rather have stayed and help Amanda sweep. So she walked very slowly down the stairs and out of doors and was none too cordial in her greeting to Junior. But he didn't seem to mind and as it's very hard to keep on snubbing a person who doesn't notice he is being snubbed, Mary Jane soon gave it up and they

began making mud pies. Nice goo-y mud pies out of the black mud in the to-be-geranium bed near the house.

But hardly had they finished their pies and arranged them on the edge of the porch to bake, before Junior's mother called him to come home.

"She's always calling you home," protested Mary Jane, "but I 'pose you'll have to go or you can't ever come over here again!"

"Yes," agreed Junior, "I'd better go home. But I'll come back again." And he started to wipe his muddy hands on his trousers.

"Oh, don't, Junior!" cried Mary Jane. "You know what your mother'll say! She don't like mud pies anyway. Come into the house and wash 'em before you go."

The two children skipped into the house and upstairs to the bathroom where Mary

Jane filled the bowl with warm water—then she thought of something.

"Do you like to walk out of doors in the rain?" she asked craftily.

"Yes," replied Junior in surprise, "only my mother won't let me."

"Don't you think she'd let you if it rained indoors?"

"I don't know, 'cause it don't," replied Junior decidedly.

"Yes, it does, it does at our house," said Mary Jane. "You stand inside this door and I'll show you."

Junior seemed to have some objection to closets so it took coaxing to get him where Mary Jane wanted him. But when, on careful inspection, he found that this closet had two doors, quite unlike other closets he was acquainted with, and also that it looked very

harmless, he stepped over the high sill and onto the tile floor. Quick as a flash Mary Jane reached up and turned on the water—and down came the deluge!

Water so cold that it took his breath away so he couldn't scream and then, in a minute, so hot that it burned him, descended from the spray in the ceiling and soaked him to the skin. Mary Jane sat on the door sill, in all the splatter, and laughed and laughed. Junior grabbed for the door and shook it trying to get out—just as Mrs. Merrill opened the door from her bedroom onto the sight. Junior darted passed her and ran down the stairs, dripping water and mud from his dirty hands on every step and screaming at the top of his voice all the way.

"What in the world—" began Mrs. Merrill.

"We was just talking about water from the sky in the house," explained Mary Jane innocently, "and Junior was surprised to see it come. I guess he thought water from the sky in the house would be dry," she added.

"And I," said Mrs. Merrill as she took off her dusting cap and reaching into the clothes closet for her coat, "will have to leave my work and go over and explain and apologize. Mary Jane, you sit right there on that chair till I come back and you can't have another little playmate over this week—not one!"

Mary Jane sat down on the big chair and started counting the boards in the floor. "One, two, three, six nine seven, ten," she said to herself patiently. "Then if nobody can come to see me, I guess I'll have to find somebody right in this house. I wonder—"

What did she wonder?—wait and see.

PLAYMATE DOROTHY

"YOU sit right there, Dorothy, and make yourself at home," said Mary Jane, "and I'll get Marie Georgiannamore for you to play with."

"What in the world!" exclaimed Mrs. Merrill to herself as she passed Mary Jane's door on the morning after Junior had had his shower bath. "Who can be there now? I particularly told Mary Jane not to invite any children in, this week." She opened the door and was already to say, "Whose little girl are you?" as she usually did to new friends that Mary Jane brought home. But this time there wasn't any little girl there! Only Mary Jane and her dolls and her teddy

bears playing as contentedly as you please.

"Oh!" laughed Mrs. Merrill, much relieved, "that's a joke on me, Mary Jane; I thought you were talking to some new little girl. I didn't know that you had named one of your dolls Dorothy."

"I was talking to a little girl," answered Mary Jane solemnly, "and I haven't changed the name of one of my dolls—not one."

"Well, that's nice," said Mrs. Merrill, but she didn't pay more than half attention to what Mary Jane said because she just happened to think of something that she surely must order from the grocery as soon as she could get downstairs. "I'm glad you are having such a good time." And she kissed her little daughter lightly and went away.

"You'll have to excuse her, Dorothy,"

apologized Mary Jane, "grown folks don't know much sometimes and I'm sure she didn't see you or she'd have asked you to stay for lunch." She pulled two chairs over to the window seat, got out paper and colored pencils and then sat down in one chair. "Now you make snow on your paper and I'll make a picture."

For some minutes there was quiet in the nursery except for the sound of Mary Jane's pencil rubbing, rubbing on the paper.

"There!" she said at last, "there's a cow and two chickens and a strawberry like they have at my great-grandmother's that Dr. Smith told me about. Let's see your snow," she added politely. She picked up the blank piece of white paper that lay in front of the other chair and looked at it thoughtfully.

"You do make nice snow, Dorothy," she said, "it's so clean and white. Now let's go down and see if lunch is ready."

When she reached the door of the nursery, she stepped back to let some one pass out in front of her and as she went downstairs she was careful to keep well to one side so that there was plenty of room for some one to walk beside her. She went through the empty living room, through the dining room and out into the kitchen where her mother was working.

"May Dorothy and I have our lunch?" she asked.

"Lunch?" asked Mrs. Merrill, and in her hurry she only noticed half what Mary Jane said, "yes, in just a minute. It's almost time for father and I'm so late. Will you run into the dining room, dear, and see that the

chairs are all set up to the table as they should be? That's a good little helper."

Mary Jane hurried back to the dining room and set five chairs up to the table—to be sure they were a bit crowded and so was the extra place Mary Jane set with napkin, plate, glass and silver that she got from the sideboard, but Mary Jane didn't seem to notice that, she was quite pleased and satisfied with her work.

"Now you sit right here, Dorothy," she said, "and I'll sit beside you so you won't be lonesome." She pushed her chair beside the vacant one and climbed into it.

Father and mother and Alice came into the room one after another and each exclaimed over the vacant chair.

"Who's the company?" asked father.

"Why the chair?" demanded Alice.

"I thought you knew how to count, Mary Jane," added mother. "Didn't you know there were only four of us? You're a funny little girl!"

"I can count," said Mary Jane with great dignity, "and I know there are four of us when five of us isn't here. But I had to have a chair for Dorothy."

And then, for the first time, Mrs. Merrill realized that something was going on in Mary Jane's mind—something new.

"Dorothy?" she asked kindly; "who is this Dorothy you have been telling me about?"

"She's the little girl who comes to see me when you won't let me play with anybody come to see me," explained Mary Jane patiently, "and I'm glad she's here because I'm lonesome and I want her to stay for lunch

because she's a nice little girl and I don't like people to laugh."

Mrs. Merrill frowned at Mr. Merrill and Alice who showed signs of laughing and then gathered her little girl into her arms. "Have you been as lonesome as that?" she asked.

"Just as lonesome as lonesome," answered Mary Jane. "I'm lonesomer than when nobody comes to see me because this time I know nobody's coming to see me even if they wouldn't anyway."

"Why is she so lonesome?" asked Mr. Merrill who seemed to understand just what his little girl meant even though what she said was a little mixed. "Can't anybody play with her?"

Mrs. Merrill reminded him of Junior's

shower bath and of her command that Mary Jane should have no more guests till she had learned how to treat them. "I've been too busy this morning to give any lessons in treating guests," she added, "but I had planned to have a first rate lesson this afternoon. I had planned to take Mary Jane calling with me; then she could see just what good times folks can have and still be kind and polite. How would you like to go calling with me, Mary Jane?"

"Really?" exclaimed Mary Jane who could hardly believe her good luck; "really truly, grown-up-lady calling, mother?"

"Really truly," said mother, "but wait a minute. Do you think you could leave Dorothy at home? I wouldn't care to take two little girls at once."

"Oh, yes," replied Mary Jane who was suddenly anxious to oblige, "I could leave her home and I think maybe, while I was gone she might go away on the train to—to —see her Aunt Effie, don't you think she might?"

"Indeed I do," said Mrs. Merrill. "It wouldn't surprise me a bit to find her gone when we came back. Now eat your lunch, Mary Jane, and then we'll go upstairs and rest a bit before we dress to make our calls. We'll have a beautiful afternoon and you'll see just how nicely folks treat other folks when they come to visit. And remember, dear, if you had treated Junior as kindly as you treat Dorothy, you could have had all the company that came."

"I am remembering it," said Mary Jane

meekly, "and, mother, may I wear my pink dress with the smocking and the pink ribbons?"

Mrs. Merrill said that she might, so a very happy Mary Jane finished her lunch and hurried upstairs to lie down for fifteen minutes in a dark room.

When the time was up Mrs. Merrill came to her door and asked, "Did you see anything of my butterfly pin when you cleared off my dresser yesterday morning, Mary Jane?"

"No-o-o, I didn't," said Mary Jane thoughtfully.

"That's funny," replied Mrs. Merrill, "I was sure it was there! Of course I should have put it where it belongs but I can't see where it could get to—I know Amanda wouldn't take it and you would have remem-

bered, wouldn't you, if you had put it anywhere?"

"Yes, mother, I'm sure I would," said Mary Jane positively. "I know I didn't touch it, I didn't even see it once!"

"Well, I've hunted everywhere I can think of so I guess it's gone and I would rather lose anything I have than lose that pin! Just see how big ladies get punished when they are careless! I didn't put my pin away where it belonged and now it is gone. But don't you feel too badly, dear," she added when she saw how sorry Mary Jane felt for her; "it's time for us to dress for our calls."

So Mary Jane quickly forgot about her mother's loss. She scrubbed her hands and put on her own shoes and made herself all ready for her mother to brush her hair and slip on the new pink dress. Then the very

last thing, the hat with the pink rosebuds was put on and they started out.

Such a good time as they did have! Two ladies they called on, and one must surely have expected a little girl would come to visit because she had tea served with sandwiches (Mary Jane ate three, two made with marmalade and one with lettuce—think of that!) and pink candles which twinkled and looked *almost* as nice as the sandwiches. Such a *very* good time did they have that they barely got home in time to meet Alice as she came in from school.

And playmate Dorothy must surely have gone away while they were calling because she was never heard of again.

LEARNING TO SEW

"I LIKE to do lady things," said Mary Jane the next morning. "Isn't there something we can do to-day?"

"Something that's a 'lady' thing?" asked Mrs. Merrill.

"Yes, a really truly lady thing," explained Mary Jane; "something that I don't know how to do 'cause I like to learn things."

"Yes, there are lots of things we might do, but I haven't much time I fear," replied her mother, "because I promised Alice I would finish her dress."

"Then you'll have to sew," said Mary Jane and though she tried not to mind, she couldn't help being disappointed.

"Yes," agreed Mrs. Merrill, "I'll have to sew. But I'll tell you, Mary Jane, what you might do" (and Mary Jane's disappointment vanished as soon as she saw her mother had a plan) "you might sew too."

"Oh, goody, goody, goody!" exclaimed Mary Jane and she clapped her hands gayly, "and that's a grown-up lady thing for true!"

"I should say it was," said Mrs. Merrill.

"Shall I make me a dress?" asked Mary Jane.

"Well, not just the first thing," laughed Mrs. Merrill; "folks don't learn to sew on dresses—not even big ladies do that. Now what had you better begin on?" And she thought a minute while Mary Jane watched her anxiously. "Oh, I know! You can make a picture card."

"Sew a card?" asked Mary Jane doubtfully.

"Yes, it's lots of fun," said her mother.

"But Alice don't do that," objected Mary Jane, "she sews goods."

"I know she does now," replied Mrs. Merrill, "but she used to sew cards and she loved doing it too. Only that was so long ago you know nothing about it. I remember that just the other day I saw some pretty picture sewing cards at the store; I'll go right to the phone and order some for you." And she hurried off to get the order in before the first delivery started.

As she came back into the room Mary Jane asked, "Do I have to wait all the time till the picture card comes before I begin my lady work?"

"It won't be long till that gets here," said Mrs. Merrill; "maybe it will be here before we are ready because we haven't done our breakfast dishes yet—that's a joke on us, isn't it?"

Mary Jane agreed that it was and in gay spirits they set to work.

Some folks might have said that a little girl Mary Jane's age was far too young to dry dishes—that she might break them. But Mary Jane's mother was not one of those "some folks." She believed that little girls not only could help well, but that they liked helping. So Mary Jane had learned to dry dishes some time ago and could polish the silver and shine the glasses just as well as any one. Of course it might take a little longer than when mother or 'Manda or Alice did it, but who cares about time when a job

is well done? And there was one thing about working with her mother that Mary Jane especially liked; while they worked, they always talked—such fine talks, Mary Jane thought, about everything that Mary Jane liked to talk about.

This morning it was sewing, of course.

"How old were you when you learned to sew, mother?" asked Mary Jane as she picked up a glass and began to shine it.

"Let me see," said Mrs. Merrill thoughtfully. "I was younger than you are, I know, I wasn't more than three and a half or four years old."

"And did you sew on a card?" asked Mary Jane.

"No, because sewing cards for little girls to learn on were not made then. Or if they were, my mother didn't know about them.

I learned by making a quilt for my doll bed."

"What's a quilt?" asked Mary Jane as she set her first glass down and picked up another.

"A quilt is something like a comforter," explained Mrs. Merrill, "only it isn't made so thick and heavy and the outside is made up of lots of little pieces of cloth sewed together in a pattern. I remember my grandmother Camfield came to visit us and she thought it was so dreadful that I—a great big girl nearly four years old—hadn't learned to sew or knit. So she hunted up my mother's piece bag the very first day she came and cut out some blocks for me to piece. Funny pieces they were, too, Mary Jane, you'll laugh when I show it to you sometime! Because the goods look very different from the kinds of goods we see now, very different.

I know one piece had big red horse shoes all over it and another had horses' heads. Those pieces were from my little brother's waists and were thought just exactly right for boys in those days."

"Can't I make a quilt for my dollies?" asked Mary Jane eagerly.

"To be sure you can, dear," answered Mrs. Merrill, "only I think you will find it more fun to learn to sew on those pretty cards I've ordered. Then when you can handle your needle well, you can make a quilt just as I did. There, now, we're through here," she added, "and if you'll clean the bathroom washstand while I tidy the bedrooms, we can sit right down to sew."

If there was one bit of housework above another that Mary Jane loved to do, it was to clean the bathroom washstand; and she

could do it beautifully, too. Mrs. Merrill gave her a soft cloth and the box of cleaning powder and she went to work. First she cleaned the soap dish; then she sprinkled a little powder on her cloth (just as she had seen 'Manda do many a time) and then she rubbed and rubbed the faucets till they shone so bright and clear that she could see her hair ribbon in them. Next she sprinkled powder on the stand and cleaned that; and last of all, she scoured the bowl. Then she called to her mother (and this part was the most fun of all Mary Jane thought) and watched while Mrs. Merrill inspected the work and said (as she always did), "that's *beautiful*, Mary Jane! What a fine worker you are!" Then she ran and put away the can of powder and the cloth and the job was done.

This morning, just as the can was set in the

closet where it belonged, the door bell rang.

"Can you go, dear?" asked Mrs. Merrill. "I expect that's the delivery man with your sewing."

Could Mary Jane go? Well, indeed she could! She rushed down the stairs as fast as she could go and opened the front door in such a jiffy that the delivery man jumped with surprise as she said, "Is it my sewing?"

"Search me," he answered, "it's a box." And he handed her the parcel.

"Oh, dear, then it isn't," said Mary Jane much disappointed; and she turned and went slowly up the stairs—so slowly, that you would never have guessed, from the time it took her to go up, that they were the same stairs she had so quickly hurried down not two minutes before.

"It isn't it," she announced sadly at the door of her mother's room.

"Oh, yes, I guess it is," said Mrs. Merrill, and Mary Jane noticed that she didn't seem a bit worried. "It must be, because I haven't bought anything else. Come over here and let's see."

She pulled her chair up to the window and turned Mary Jane's little rocker facing it. "Now, let's see what it is," she said; "maybe you'd like to open it."

Mary Jane would. She pulled off the string, unfolded the paper—and what do you suppose she found inside? The prettiest box you ever saw! On it was a picture of a little girl, about as old as Mary Jane maybe, and some queer looking cards, pictures of the cards, that is, and some gay look-

ing colors that appeared to be pictures of colored thread.

"Why, it *is* my sewing, isn't it, mother?" exclaimed Mary Jane in happy surprise.

"Looks like it, doesn't it, dear?" agreed Mrs. Merrill. "Suppose you open it to be sure."

Mary Jane opened the box as it lay on her lap and the inside was even more interesting looking, she found, than the outside had been. The box was divided into three parts by tiny little partitions. In the biggest part was a pile of cards with funny marks and holes that looked as though they were meant to make a picture; and in the middle sized part was a pile of gay colored skeins of thread; and in the littlest part was a paper of needles with nice big eyes.

"Oh, mother!" exclaimed Mary Jane. That was all she could say, she was so surprised and pleased.

"I thought you'd like that," said her mother. "Now, while I get out my sewing, you look over the pictures and see which one you'd rather make first. Then pick out the color thread you want to sew with and I'll show you how to cut the skein and thread your needle."

Mary Jane looked once through the pile of cards and then again before she could make a choice. She finally laid out one that had a picture of a little girl in a big sunbonnet and another of a sunflower growing in a garden. "There, now!" she asked her mother, "which shall I make? I want to do both right away quick and see what they look like when they are sewed."

"Let's make the little girl first," suggested mother, "and make her wear a pink sunbonnet just like yours. Then you can make the sunflower next and the two together will be Mary Jane working in a garden."

That suited Mary Jane exactly; so the thread was cut, the needle threaded (and that wasn't nearly as hard work as Mary Jane had feared it would be, thanks to the needle's big eye) and she set to work.

Such a busy morning as they did have—Mary Jane and her mother! Mary Jane liked sewing even better than she had thought she would and she worked faithfully. So faithfully that by the time the clock said, "time to get lunch"! the little girl with the pink sunbonnet was all finished and the thread was ready to begin the sunflower.

"Ugh!" exclaimed Mary Jane with a big

stretch, "we worked hard, didn't we, mother?"

"Indeed we did," laughed Mrs. Merrill, "and now we'd better hurry down and start lunch. I see Alice way down at the corner there and by the way the girls are all talking together—see them, Mary Jane" (and she pointed down the street where a parting between the trees allowed them to see a long way)—"I guess Alice has some plan to talk about. Luckily we'll be ready for her in a jiffy!" And together the sewing ladies hurried down to the kitchen.

MAKING READY FOR THE PICNIC

ALICE dashed into the house with a flurry of good spirits.

"Oh, mother," she exclaimed, "the girls say that the violets are out and we do want to have a wild flower hunting picnic up Clearwater! May we? And may I go?"

Mrs. Merrill dropped her work and looked up at her big girl in surprise.

"A picnic up Clearwater!" she said. "Is it warm enough for picnics? Oh" (as Alice started to exclaim), "I know it is warm enough if a little girl has been running home from school—I don't doubt that it is! But you must remember that the ground stays damp a long time in the spring and that a

picnic usually means sitting around on the ground."

"Well, this wouldn't be a sitting around picnic, mother," said Alice eagerly, "because we're going to hunt violets and you can't sit around much if you do that."

"No, that's true," laughed Mrs. Merrill, who very well knew how Alice loved to flower hunt through the woods. "Who are 'we' that you speak of?"

"Oh, Ruth and Marcia and Frances, of course, and maybe Virginia and Jane," replied Alice.

"And whose mother is going along?" questioned Mrs. Merrill, who always liked to get all the information she could before making a decision.

"The girls all *hoped* you'd go, mother,"

said Alice, proudly, "because you're such good fun at a picnic."

"Jollier!" teased Mrs. Merrill. "What would I do with Mary Jane?"

"Why not take her along?" asked Alice. "She's getting big now."

At that, Mary Jane who had been watching and listening all this time, dropped the napkins she had just taken out of the drawer and clapped her hands happily.

"Oh, goody, goody, will you really, mother?" she cried. "I've always wanted to go to one of Alice's picnics!" Which was perfectly true. You see, the little group of girls of which Alice was a member, often had gay picnic parties and always and always Mary Jane had wanted to go along. But always and always she had been told she

was too little to walk so far, or too little to carry her share of baskets or too little to—something; so she had had to stay home.

"Take Mary Jane too?" asked Mrs. Merrill thoughtfully. "Why, yes, I guess we could. I'll tell you what we will do, girls. We'll watch and wait and see what the weather is by Friday noon. If it continues fine and warm for two days, as it is to-day, I really believe we could have a picnic. Of course the girls understand that it would be a 'start in the morning' picnic? It's too early in the season for late afternoon picnics."

Alice assured her that a morning picnic was just what they all wanted. "You see, mother," she added, "Sunday is Miss Heath's birthday" (Miss Heath was the girls' teacher) "and we want to fix a big basket of flowers to give her."

Never was the weather watched more closely than it was those two days. The girls at school talked of nothing but the hoped-for picnic and the minute Alice came into the house she had something to say about it. Mary Jane, for her part, thought she simply *could* not wait till the promised day came. She sewed on her cards, she watered her garden and watched for the first bits of green, and she played with her dolls, but with all those nice things to do, the days seemed to drag by so slowly.

But at last Friday noon came. Alice rushed home from school to announce what every one knew already—that the sky was clear, the air warm, and they could surely have the picnic.

Mother met her at the door as she hurried up the walk.

"I did hope you'd come promptly," she said. "Mary Jane and I have lunch on the table ready to eat and we want you to hurry and help us plan the picnic eats."

"Oh, goody!" exclaimed Alice and she threw down her hat and sweater and slipped into her seat at the table.

With the help of father and Mary Jane, the picnic dinner was planned. Each girl was to take a basket containing her own sandwiches, a paper plate, a knife, fork and spoon and cup; and then one more thing to eat—and enough of that one thing for everybody. There was to be cake, and cheese and pickles and fruit and eggs and many good things.

"And will Mary Jane take a basket?" asked Alice.

"Indeed she will," replied Mrs. Merrill,

"and it will have something good in it, you can count on that."

"Oh, what will it be?" asked Alice eagerly.

"It will be a surprise," said Mrs. Merrill, laughing. "No, there's no use asking, it's a surprise! Now you run along so as to give these slips of instructions to each girl before school begins." And not another word would she say.

After Alice was safely out of the house, Mary Jane and her mother had a good laugh over their surprise.

"Won't she be pleased?" said Mary Jane happily.

"And won't she be surprised!" exclaimed Mrs. Merrill. "I thought surely she would ask to take some and then she might have guessed! Now, dear, you help me clear up

this lunch table, then you run upstairs and take your rest while I bake the cake. After you are dressed, you'd better run down to the grocery and order your surprise so they surely have enough on hand in the morning. I'll write what you want on this slip of paper."

So Mary Jane, who always loved to help in big folks fashion, tidied up the table. First she put away all the clean silver and napkins. Then she propped open the swinging doors that led through the butler's pantry. Then, with the way clear to the kitchen, she carried out all the plates and glasses and cups that were to be washed. After the dishes were all out, she shook the crumbs off the little blue doilies mother used for lunches and put them away neatly in the drawer.

Mrs. Merrill thought that was a great deal of help for a little girl her age to give.

At three o'clock she skipped down to the grocery at the corner and showed him the paper on which Mrs. Merrill had written the order for the morning.

"You tell her that'll be all right," said the grocery clerk as he looked at the slip. "You can come down any time after nine and I'll have them all done up ready for you, young lady."

Mary Jane walked primly out of the store; it always made her feel funny to be called young lady. But the minute she was out of the clerk's sight she ran as fast as ever she could, toward home.

"He says it's all right, he has plenty," she reported to her mother.

"That's good," answered Mrs. Merrill comfortably; "there's nothing like being sure. You run to the kitchen now, Mary Jane. I left the frosting bowl on the chair. You'll find a teaspoon in it and you can have any frosting you can scrape out—it's white butter frosting, the very kind you like best."

Mary Jane hurried off to the kitchen and found that mother had kindly left nice little streaks of frosting all around the side of the bowl and oh, dear, but it was good!

Alice came in soon and a pleasant bustling around there was then. You see, it was the first picnic of the year and baskets had to be brought down from the attic and dusted out; picnic plates and cups hunted up from their winter storage places and everything made ready for the morning. Mary

Jane went here and there helping all that she could and having the happiest kind of a time—for wasn't this *her* picnic too? The very first picnic she had ever had with the "big" girls!

By dinner time that evening, everything was ready as ready could be the day before. Alice had her practicing done, mother had the grocery order for Sunday made out and the baskets with their napkins, plates, knives, forks, spoons and cups were set in a row on the dining room window seat.

Bright and early the next morning the two girls were up and ready to help. Mary Jane tidied up the breakfast table and helped mother wash the dishes while Alice did her practicing. Then the two girls made the beds and Alice set the bathroom in order.

"Now, we're ready to make sandwiches," Alice announced.

"That's good," said Mrs. Merrill. "I think you can make those all by yourself, Alice. Mary Jane will help you if you need any waiting on, and perhaps she can wrap the sandwiches in oiled paper as fast as you make them."

"Yes, I can, mother," cried Mary Jane happily. "I'll get the old scissors to cut out the papers while Alice begins."

"Will you cut the bread for me, mother?" asked Alice. "You cut it evener than I can."

"Gladly," replied Mrs. Merrill. "Then I'll skip up to the grocery with my order so that things can be delivered in time, before we lock up the house."

She cut the bread and set it in neat piles ready for the sandwich making; then she

hurried off on her errand and the girls set to their work.

Mary Jane cut the papers and chopped nuts in a chopping bowl and got the lettuce from the ice box and wrapped up the sandwiches Alice made. She could do that nicely —wrap them just as nice and neat as though they were packages from a store. She set them at the back of the table ready for the baskets; three nut sandwiches, three celery sandwiches, three lettuce sandwiches and three jelly sandwiches all ready to be put into Alice's and mother's and her own baskets.

"There, now," said Alice, as she made the last one, "that's four for each of us and mother said that would be plenty with all the other good things we'd have to eat. But, Mary Jane!" she added in dismay, "we

haven't a single meat sandwich! And I do love meat sandwiches! How could mother have forgotten that?"

"She didn't forget it," said Mary Jane, "she—" And then she clapped her hand over her mouth and ran out of the room for fear she'd tell the secret.

But Alice was so interested in her sandwiches that she didn't notice, which was a very good thing as Mary Jane wouldn't have wanted her secret guessed, indeed, no!

Mrs. Merrill came back from her errand just then and, meeting Mary Jane in the hall she whispered, "I brought your package from the grocery, dear. It's all wrapped up and hidden in the bottom of your basket." Then aloud she added, "Now run along and get your wraps, Mary Jane, I saw Frances and Jane coming as I turned the corner."

She helped Alice tuck the sandwiches in the baskets, one of each kind in each basket; she put the big, beautiful cake in her own and the plate of deviled eggs in Alice's and covered the napkins over the tops.

"Mary Jane hasn't anything to take in her basket but just her own things," said Alice suddenly; "she ought to have something."

"So she ought!" said Mrs. Merrill, her eyes twinkling, "but it's too late now to get anything more; the girls are out front this very minute. I guess we'll have enough to eat so don't you worry about Mary Jane's basket. You start along out to the street and I'll lock the back door and join you in a jiffy."

A jolly party it was that strolled out of the front yard! Each girl had her basket

covered most mysteriously with a fresh white napkin—it was enough to make a person hungry just to look at them! Mary Jane, who felt a little queer and important on being with the big girls for her first outing, waited at the end of the walk for her mother and then they ran a few steps till they joined the big girls.

"They don't know what they're going to do!" said Mary Jane gayly.

But, dear me, Mary Jane didn't know what *she* was going to do! If she had even guessed what was to happen to her before she came back home—but she didn't and perhaps it was just as well she didn't; knowing might have spoiled the fun!

THE PICNIC UP CLEARWATER

CLEARWATER was a pretty little stream that ran through the woods just west of the city where the Merrills lived. And as the Merrill home was on the west side of the city, the woods and the creek were not far from their home. To reach Clearwater they only had to walk through the Campus just west of their yard, cut through the fields back beyond and after a walk of less than a mile they would find themselves by the bank of a swift running creek of clear fresh water. And along the banks of this little creek grew the loveliest violets and buttercups and Sweet Williams that could be found anywhere.

Mary Jane held her precious basket firmly

and walked along beside her mother while the big girls skipped on ahead.

But when the girls reached the banks of Clearwater they waited till Mrs. Merrill and Mary Jane caught up with them.

"Now keep your eyes open for flowers," called Alice as they started on again, all together this time, "we don't want to miss any."

"What are we to do with them when we've picked them?" asked Frances as they walked along.

"You won't get more than a bunch before lunch, I fancy," said Mrs. Merrill, "so you can hold them in your hand till we find where we will eat. Then, after lunch, you can dampen your napkin and wrap up the stems and put your posies in the bottom of your

basket. That is," she added slyly, "unless you have a lot of food to take back home."

"Not much danger of that!" laughed Frances. "I could eat more than I have in there right this very minute!"

So, laughing and joking and picking the blossoms they found as they walked, the little party walked along the creek till they came to a bend where the creek widened a bit and where some big bowlders made an interest looking spot.

"This is the very place I was looking for!" exclaimed Mrs. Merrill. "I couldn't recall just how far down the creek it was! Suppose we make this our headquarters. Set your baskets on that biggest rock over there —that will keep your food high and dry. That flat rock will be our table and these two

rocks here," pointing to two angle-shaped rocks that formed a big V, "will be just right for making a fire."

"A fire!" exclaimed Alice. "What do we want with a fire?"

"Oh, I thought it might be fun to make one," said Mrs. Merrill indifferently, "but of course if you don't care to—"

"But we do, Mrs. Merrill," interrupted Ruth, "I think it would be jolly."

"So do I," said Alice hastily, "only I was wishing we had thought of it before and had brought along something to cook."

"But we can have the fun of making it anyway," said Frances and she started off in search of kindling.

In a few minutes a brisk little fire was burning between the stones and Mrs. Merrill

added the sticks the girls brought her till she had a nice bed of coals.

"Do let's eat now," said Marcia, "I'm starved! Then we can finish our picking afterwards."

"It's only half past eleven," said Mrs. Merrill, laughingly.

"Who cares?" asked Ruth. "That's the fun of a picnic—doing something different."

"Yes, let's," said Frances and Virginia together. So, as every one seemed willing, the baskets were opened and the goodies spread out on a tablecloth laid over the biggest rock.

"I love a picnic that happens before fly time," said Virginia as she spread a tempting pile of cookies out where every one could see.

"We all do," agreed Mrs. Merrill, "and as there doesn't seem to be one single prowler

around, I guess I'll set out my cake." And of course the girls "oh"-ed and exclaimed over its tempting whiteness as she set it on the rock table.

"What have you in your basket, Mary Jane?" asked Frances.

Mary Jane looked at her mother and, as Mrs. Merrill nodded approvingly, she laid back the napkin and gave each girl a long wire toasting fork.

"Well, what in the world, mother!" exclaimed Alice. "Did you bring marshmallows?"

Mrs. Merrill shook her head and Mary Jane, without a word (though she was trembling inside, she was that excited over her secret) picked up a big, funny looking package and unrolled it slowly. The girls scented a secret and watched eagerly.

Slowly the paper unrolled—and then the white paper inside and—there was the secret in plain sight!

"Sausages!" exclaimed all the girls in one breath, "sausages we can cook!"

"How jolly!" cried Alice. "You certainly did keep that secret well, Mary Jane —I never even suspected."

"May we cook them right away?" asked Ruth. "I could eat a million!"

"Pass them around, Mary Jane," said Mrs. Merrill. "I expect you could eat a good many, dear, but be sure to cook each one well before eating it—you don't need to hurry, I think there are plenty!" she added teasingly.

The girls, each armed with a long fork on the end of which was speared a sausage, gathered round the fire. Mary Jane had her

own fork and her own sausage, just like the big girls and cooked her sausage without burning her fingers, which was lucky, as burns are nò fun.

How good those warm sausages did taste with the fine sandwiches and pickles and other goodies from home. But Ruth didn't eat a million after all—she found three quite a-plenty; if she'd had more she couldn't have eaten any cake and that *would* have been too bad!

By half past twelve, there wasn't a scrap of anything left and every one was saying that they had had just exactly enough to eat.

"Then I suggest we shake our crumbs into the creek," said Mrs. Merrill, "I know the minnows will enjoy them. Then you can fix the baskets ready for your posies and still have a good two hours left for picking."

So the napkins were shaken out and the baskets arranged in neat order on the biggest rock and then every one ran in search of flowers.

"My, what a lovely bunch you have!" exclaimed Alice a little later as she saw how diligently Mary Jane had been picking. "Miss Heath will like that, I know."

"But Miss Heath isn't the one this is for," said Mary Jane quickly, "not unless mother says so."

"Who do you want to give it to, pet?" asked Mrs. Merrill who happened to be near enough to hear what was said, "your father?"

"No," said Mary Jane, decidedly, "Daddah will come out and get some to-morrow, maybe. I want to send mine on the train—will they take flowers on the train?"

"On the train!" exclaimed Mrs. Merrill. "Yes, they take flowers, but who do you want to send them to?"

"My Aunt Effie," said Mary Jane. "I want to send my flowers to her."

"My thoughtful little girl!" said Mrs. Merrill and she put her arms tenderly around her daughter. "I think that is a fine plan and she'll be so glad to get them. You pick all you can and then after we get home, I'll pack them in a box and Daddah will take them down to the station this evening and put them on the New York train."

So of course, after that promise, Mary Jane picked more and more till she had a fine big bunch of violets and buttercups.

But picking violets is tiresome work—that is, it is tiresome if you do it for long. And it's not much wonder that after she had

picked three handfuls, Mary Jane decided that she had enough. She wandered back to the rocks where the baskets were set and looked around for the others. All were in plain sight, but they were scattered about, each one picking where she thought the picking was best.

"I think I'll sit down here," said the little girl, "and fix mine so their stems are all straight." And she sat down on the biggest rock close by the edge of the creek—right at the bend where the water was deepest.

She spread her posies out on the rock and rearranged them so that the stems were all tidy and straight. Then she happened to think of the crumbs that were fed to the minnows. "I guess they's all eaten up now," she thought, "but I guess I'd better see."

So she leaned out over the water to look.

No one ever knew quite how it happened —Mary Jane was sure she didn't lean too far, and mother and the big girls, busy with their picking, didn't notice a thing till they heard a scream. Then they looked up and no Mary Jane was to be seen!

From all directions they came a-running, Mary Jane's screams guiding them straight to the big rock.

Alice and Ruth reached there first and without a word to each other or a thought of their clothes or shoes, they slid down the bank and waded out into the water.

"Don't be frightened, sweetheart," called Alice comfortingly, "we're getting you!"

Alice grabbed her shoulders and Ruth took her feet and together they scrambled up the bank and handed her into mother's out-reaching arms.

She sat down on the biggest rock close by the edge of the creek.

Then there was a hurrying for surely! Virginia and Ruth and Jane rushed around for more sticks to build up the almost burned out fire. Frances and Alice made a curtain of sweaters to keep off the winds while Mrs. Merrill pulled off Mary Jane's wet clothes and rubbed her briskly with the old tablecloth. Then Mary Jane sat in state, wrapped up in four sweaters, while the "rescue girls," as Alice and Ruth were called, dried their shoes and wet skirts.

"You brave girls!" said Mrs. Merrill as soon as she had time for a word. "I am *so* proud of you!"

"Pooh!" exclaimed Alice, "it wasn't deep a bit! See, mother, I'm not wet above my knees!"

"All the same," said Mary Jane firmly, and it was the first word she had said since

they pulled her out, "water's wet! And it's lots colder than I thought it would be and the bottom of the water's hard—so there!"

Everybody laughed at that, and then they all felt better—the scare was over.

By the time Mary Jane's clothes were dry, everybody had a basketful of flowers. Alice and Ruth straightened them all out neatly and tied them into bunches while their shoes and stockings were drying. As the girls all lived in the neighborhood, they decided to put the bunches in a tub in Alice's basement.

"Then we can come over at eight o'clock in the morning and put them in the gift basket and take them to Miss Heath's before breakfast," said Frances. And so it was planned.

Alice and Ruth put on their shoes and

stockings and Mrs. Merrill dressed Mary Jane in her dried out clothes—and how funny they did look too—and then the picnic started for home.

Mr. Merrill was just driving up to the house when they got back home and he stared in amazement when he saw Mary Jane.

"What have they done to your dress and your hair ribbon?" he asked.

"*They* didn't do anything but just dry it," explained Mary Jane. "I doned it myself. I bent over to look at the fishies and the water hit me and the bottom was hard and I got wet and Alice and Ruth pulled me out and everybody dried me and will you please put my flowers on the train for Aunt Effie?"

"Well, I'd call all that enough for one day," replied father. "It's lucky the water

wasn't deep—it's better to feel a hard bottom than none at all, little girl."

"And will you mail my flowers?" asked Mary Jane.

"As soon as they're ready," promised father. And so the picnic ended.

GOING SHOPPING

"WELL, what are we doing to-day?" asked Mr. Merrill as he finished his breakfast. "This is a fine enough day to be doing something big and important."

"I'm just going to play around," said Mary Jane, "I'd like to do something big if you have it, Daddah," she added, encouragingly. "Could we go on a picnic?"

"No more picnic for you this week, young lady!" answered Mr. Merrill. "I should think you were wet enough last Saturday to last a while!"

"But that wasn't the picnic's fault," explained Mary Jane, in distress, "that just happened, and I want to go on another picnic

right away." To tell the truth, she had been a bit worried for fear her accident of the picnic would keep her father and mother from letting her go next time somebody gave a picnic party and she did so hope it wouldn't make any difference.

"I expect you do," laughed Mrs. Merrill, "and I'm certain your wetting didn't hurt you any. Don't you worry, dear, you shall go next time there is any picnic to go to. In fact, you and Alice and I may go on a picnic to-morrow—but it will be a picnic of quite a different kind, I'll assure you."

"Oh, mother! Do tell us what it will be!" exclaimed both girls.

"I was talking with Doris's mother last evening," began Mrs. Merrill, "and she tells me that it's very satisfactory to go to the city to buy hats and shoes. What would

you think" (she asked Mr. Merrill) "if the girls and I took the trolley to the city to-morrow and bought our summer outfits?"

"I'd think that was a fine plan," said Mr. Merrill, "and I'd say that perhaps I'd go along if I was asked."

"Oh, would you, Daddah?" cried Alice. "That would be jolly. Then it's all settled —we're going!"

"Talk about deciding in a hurry," teased Mrs. Merrill; "when do we start?"

"I have some business that I've needed to do for a week. Suppose we all take the early limited that leaves at eight? Then we can have a good long day and time for a fine lunch together."

That plan suited Mrs. Merrill and was agreed upon at once. "Only remember,"

she reminded them, "eight o'clock on the car, means everybody up early."

"I'll set the alarm for six," promised Mr. Merrill.

"And I'll do my two days' practicing to-day," said Alice.

"And I'll help, mother, truly I will," said Mary Jane.

"We ought to have no trouble getting off then," said Mrs. Merrill, "and I, for one, think we'll have lots of fun."

That evening, every one laid out their clothes ready for morning; lists were made out and then the girls were sent to bed a whole hour earlier than usual so they would feel ready for the day's fun.

It was a good thing everything was planned before hand, for eight o'clock came *very* early the next morning—or so it

seemed; and there was considerable scrambling to get hair ribbons on and gloves buttoned and the house all locked up in time for the car.

Alice had been to the city with her mother several times before; but this was Mary Jane's first trip and she watched out of the car window with great interest and was almost sorry when the car pulled into a big train shed—the interurban station.

"You lady folks shop till one," said father as they parted, "and then we'll meet for lunch."

Mary Jane thought she had never seen such big stores in all her life. Fortunately mother decided to do some of her own and Alice's shopping first and that gave Mary Jane a chance to look around and get used to things. But finally Mrs. Merrill said,

"Now it's your turn, Mary Jane. Let's look at spring coats and then at play suits."

They got into the elevator again (and Mary Jane's heart took a funny "flip-flop" every time it started or stopped) and went to a floor where everything was for little girls. There seemed to be enough suits and dresses for all the little girls in the world and Mary Jane was certain sure that she could *never* tell which she liked best. But mother and Alice helped her and before very long they had bought a pretty little gray coat and one pink afternoon dress and two pink and two blue rompers for playtimes.

"There, now," said Mrs. Merrill as she looked at her watch, "that's all we can do before lunch. It's time to meet father this very minute." So they got into the elevator again and went to the top floor.

"This is the funniest store," Mary Jane told her father, who was waiting for them as they stepped off the car; "they sell dresses and coats and things to eat and everything right off of one elevator!"

"Think of that!" exclaimed her father as he piloted them to a table. "Well, I believe I like the things to eat best—at least right now."

"What are you going to have?" he asked Mary Jane as they sat down and made themselves comfortable.

"May I have anything I want?" she asked, "*anything?*"

"Anything at all," her father assured her.

"Then I know what I want," said she promptly, "I want chicken broth and mashed potatoes and pink ice cream."

"That's what you're going to have," Mr.

Merrill told the waiter. "I wish Alice could make up her mind as quickly," he added teasingly, for Alice was reading the whole menu from cover to cover before she made up her mind what to order.

Mary Jane had her chicken broth while the others were deciding and then she had a bit of mother's good fish to eat with the mashed potatoes which came later. And of course the pink ice cream, a big dish of it, all for herself.

"Now," said Mr. Merrill, when they were all through, "I'm going to buy Mary Jane a pair of white shoes and a pink parasol while you two finish what you have on your list and then maybe we'll have time to ride out to the park before we start for home."

"Oh!" cried Mary Jane, but that was all she could think of to say. Dresses and a

coat and lunch and a ride and shoes and a parasol—all in one day! And it wasn't a birthday either, just a regular, every day sort of a day!

"Don't worry," laughed her father for he guessed what she was thinking, "this is just once a year! Come on, now, and we'll get the shoes."

They went back to the children's floor and bought the shoes and the prettiest pink parasol Mary Jane had ever seen and then, just as they were ready to go and meet mother and Alice, a friend of father's passed by.

"Well, Tom!" cried Mr. Merrill, and he jumped up to speak to him. Mary Jane couldn't hear all they said but from what she did hear, she guessed that the man lived a long way off and that he was buying clothes to take home to his little girl. "Sit right

there, Mary Jane," Mr. Merrill called to her as he walked off in the direction of the elevator, "and I'll be back in five minutes."

Mary Jane looked around and up and down. She saw the wrapper girl high up in her box between the counters. She saw the busy clerks and floorman come and go. She saw the many shoppers—grown folks and children that passed by her seat. And the more folks she saw, the lonesomer she became; sitting there all by herself among so many folks.

"I don't think it's nice for a little girl to sit here in a big seat," she decided, "I think I'll sit somewhere that I won't *show* so much." And she looked around for a quiet corner. Between the big cases that formed the counters she spied just the place she wanted. A shelf down close enough to the

floor for her to sit on and quite out of the way of the busy crowd.

"That's where I'll wait," she said softly, "then I won't show while I'm waiting for father." And she slipped back of the big cases while no one was looking and sat down on the shelf. But the minute she got away from the confusing noises and sights, she felt very sleepy, so sleepy that she could hardly keep awake; so very sleepy, so very—

Father's five minutes lengthened out to ten and then his friend stepped into the elevator and Mr. Merrill hurried back to his little girl.

"You must excuse me, dear," he said as he approached where he had left her, "but I hadn't seen Tom in ten years and—" But there was no little girl there!

Mr. Merrill called the floorman and asked

about her. "I left her only ten minutes ago," he said as he looked at his watch, "and she wouldn't run off—I *know* Mary Jane wouldn't run off. She must be here."

"We'll find her," said the floorman, easily, "she must be in some other aisle."

They hunted up and down and up and down the aisles and they looked at many little girls—the store was full of them. But not a sign of Mary Jane did they see. Finally it came time to meet Mrs. Merrill and Alice so Mr. Merrill, knowing that they would be uneasy if he was late, hurried down to meet them and all three came back to resume the search that by now was getting pretty anxious.

"There's no need of your hunting on any other floor," said Mrs. Merrill as the floorman suggested that maybe Mary Jane had

gone to hunt her father and had lost her way. "I know my little girl and she's not far from where her father left her. Show me where she was sitting when you left and I'll find her—I'm sure."

Mr. Merrill led her to the very seat where he had left Mary Jane and then, to the surprise of all the clerks and curious shoppers who had become interested in the search, Mrs. Merrill didn't rush around and hunt as the others had. Instead, she sat down in the seat as though she had all afternoon and not a worry in the world. And then, sitting down as Mary Jane had been, she began to look around. And the very first thing she saw was the shelf, way back out of the way; and on the shelf, huddled down in a sleepy heap, her own little girl!

How the people did stare as she jumped up

quickly and hurried over to the between aisle where no one had thought of looking. And how every one did smile as she reached down and picked up Mary Jane—Mary Jane all sound asleep!

The little girl opened her eyes and slipped her arm around her mother's neck and then, as she noticed so many folks looking at her, she hid her sleepy eyes in her mother's shoulder.

"Don't you be afraid, little girl," said the floorman, in great relief, "we like little girls who know enough not to get lost. It was better to stay right there and go to sleep than to run around and hunt your father. You and your sister take this slip," and he wrote hastily on a scrap of paper, "and go upstairs to the lunch room. Maybe a dish of ice cream will help you to wake up."

So that was how it happened that Mary Jane had a trip and an adventure and some new clothes and *two* dishes of pink ice cream all in one day.

THE PAPER DOLL SHOW

BRIGHT and early the next Monday morning Mary Jane went over to Doris's house to ask if she could come and play. Fortunately the chicken pox was all over and Doris was well and was allowed to play again. Mary Jane had had so many things to do during the time that Doris had been sick and she was anxious to tell about them. And she was oh, so very glad to have her little friend to play with again.

"Come on over to my house," she urged Doris, "I can play all morning."

"Are you sure Doris won't be in your mother's way?" asked Doris' mother. "Monday morning is a busy time. I know."

"It isn't at our house," said Mary Jane positively, "because *this* day isn't wash day to-day—it's just getting ready for my sister Alice's party this afternoon and mother said we wouldn't bother if we played in the nursery, so please do let her come."

"Very well," laughed Doris's mother, "if you're as sure as all that I guess I'll let her go, but I should think getting ready for a party would be *almost* as much work as wash day! What are you going to play?"

"Paper dolls," said Mary Jane. "I have two, five new sheets and two scissors that don't prick that my Aunt Effie sent to me and she said that Doris could play with them too."

"That's fine," said Doris's mother much relieved. "I should think you little girls would have a very happy time because you

haven't seen each other for so long. Run along now, Doris, and be sure to come home when the big whistle blows for noon."

The two little girls skipped gayly across the yard, through the gap in the hedge between the houses and onto Mary Jane's porch.

"Let's play here," suggested Doris.

"We can't," said Mary Jane, "'cause mother says if we play out doors she don't know where we are so we must play in the nursery with all the windows open and have a good time and not bother. So let's do that.

"And anyway," she added as they climbed up the stairs, "out doors is bad for paper dolls so I'm not sorry."

They got out the five new sheets of paper dolls and the scissors and set to work cutting.

Now everybody who has ever played cut-out-paper dolls knows that the cutting out is the most fun. As long as there was a doll or a hat or a parasol uncut those two little girls had a beautiful time. They figured out which hats belonged to which dresses and they counted the children on the five pages so they could be divided equally. But as soon as the cutting was done, the fun was over and the girls didn't know what to do with themselves.

"I'll tell you what let's do," suggested Mary Jane suddenly, "some of these dolls have dress-up clothes like a show. Let's make a show in a box like Alice does."

What Mary Jane meant was this. Some of Alice's friends liked to plan rooms, and furnish them. And to do that they took a neat pasteboard box and stood it on its

side; then they lined it with crêpe paper for wall paper. Then they made furniture to match the color scheme (they were very particular about color schemes, Mary Jane remembered that) and they dressed dolls in crêpe paper to match and put them in the furnished room. And, Mary Jane thought this part was the best of all, when they were tired of one room, they gave it to Mary Jane and made a new one for themselves.

It happened that only the week before, Alice and her best friend Frances had made a beautiful little room, in a box of course, all done in green and pale yellow. Later they had planned one in rose and had told Mary Jane she might have the green and yellow one. It was this box Mary Jane meant to use for the show.

"You just wait till you see," she said to Doris, "you wait till—" and she dived into her closet, climbed up on the play box inside the door and reached up to the shelf where she had put the box the girls had given her.

"What is it? Where'd you get it?" demanded Doris as the treasure was pulled out.

"It's mine!" said Mary Jane proudly, "and we'll give a paper doll show like Alice does —you just see!"

Doris had no older brother or sister to give her ideas so she had to wait till Mary Jane explained her plan.

"First, we'll fix this up some way, they always do," began Mary Jane.

"But it's pretty now," objected Doris.

"Oh, yes, but we have to *fix* it," said Mary Jane scornfully, "they always do, they never use a box just as it is—never! Now what

could we do, what could go on top of a house? A roof, but what could we make a roof of? Or, oh, I think we'll put on some clouds maybe, clouds ought to be easy, would you like clouds, Doris?"

"On the top?"

"Yes, on top of the house where clouds belong."

"All right," said the obliging Doris, "I don't care which you make. But where do we get clouds?"

"Let's ask 'Manda," said Mary Jane, "she's here to help make the party. She likes me, maybe she knows where we can get some clouds." The two little girls hurried down the back stairs to the kitchen, but Amanda wasn't there. They were just about to go sorrowfully back to the nursery when Mary Jane noticed something white on the table.

"Why, here are some clouds all ready for us!" she exclaimed. "I guess 'Manda must have known we were coming! You take all you can carry, Doris, and I'll take the rest."

Doris plunged her hand bravely into the mass of beaten white of egg that filled the great platter and Mary Jane tumbled all that was left into her apron and they gleefully hurried back upstairs.

"There, now," said Mary Jane, "we'll make clouds all over our house and then we'll have the show." But that show never was held.

For just as they left the kitchen, Amanda came back into it to finish the cake she was making for the party and found that her eggs, the beautiful whites that she had beaten with such pains, were gone!

"It sooly do seem queer, Mis' Merrill,"

she said to her mistress, "them eggs was right here and then they wasn't here and eggs can't walk, kin they—leastwise not when they's beat up?"

"No, eggs can't walk but little girls can," said Mrs. Merrill for she suddenly recalled hearing mysterious sounds and giggles on the back stairs a moment or two before. "I think I know where your eggs are but *why* they are gone, I can't imagine!" And she hurried up to the nursery. And there, sure enough, were the eggs!

"What in the world are you girls doing with those eggs?" she demanded.

"Those aren't eggs," said Mary Jane scornfully, "those are clouds and this is going to be a paper doll show."

"I don't know about a paper doll show, daughter," said Mrs. Merrill seriously, "but

I do know that those are the eggs which were to have gone into the cake for Alice's party."

"Oh, mother, not really?" exclaimed Mary Jane, and the tears came into her big eyes. "I'm so sorry! I didn't mean to spoil the party, truly I didn't, mother! We just wanted some clouds—anyway I did," she added honestly, "and we went down to 'Manda and she wasn't there but the clouds were so we took them. That's all. *Will* it spoil the party?"

"I don't know what to think," said Mrs. Merrill, as she sat down between the two little girls to think and plan. "Alice wanted that especial kind of cake for her party but eggs cost so much these days—there were eight whites on that platter, Mary Jane; I don't believe I can afford eight more, really I don't."

"Oh, I can, I *can*, mother dear!" cried Mary Jane and quick as a flash she ran to her little white dresser. "I can afford it with this and I want to!" She pulled out her precious letter with a dollar bill tucked in its folds—the dollar bill that her great-grandmother had sent her and with which she was to buy something very special for herself—and handed it to her mother. "Please, mother, let her have it with this!"

"Do you realize that this is your very own dollar that you are giving me?" asked Mrs. Merrill, and Doris eyed Mary Jane's wealth with surprised eyes.

"Yes, mother, I know it is mine, mine that I was saving for a big doll, but I don't want to spoil Alice's party, truly I don't! Please let me go buy some more eggs for her cake!"

"I believe you really want to," said Mrs.

Merrill, as she slipped her arm around the eager little girl, "and I believe it's the best thing to do. You didn't realize that you were taking something that you had no right to when you took those 'clouds' for the doll house, did you, Mary Jane?"

"'Deed I didn't, mother, and please may we get the eggs now?"

Mrs. Merrill looked at her watch. "There will be just time if you go right away, dear," she said; "come the back way and I'll give you a basket to carry them in so none will be broken. And get eight, that's all you took—I'll buy the yellows from you so you will still have a good deal left from your dollar."

The two little girls skipped down to the grocery in a hurry but they didn't hurry home —no, sir! They walked slowly and care-

fully so that not an egg was even cracked.

And by the time they got home and gave Amanda the eggs and saw them all opened and divided, the whites on a platter and the yellows in a bowl, the big whistles blew for noon and Doris had to go home.

Mary Jane went with her as far as the gate and then waited under the little mulberry tree till her father came home for his lunch.

"Well, this is fine," said Mr. Merrill as he tossed her up onto his shoulder. "I like to see my little girl waiting for me. And what have you learned this morning, pussy?"

"I learned that eggs aren't clouds and that they cost money," said Mary Jane, "and I didn't spoil the party!"

"Pretty good for one morning, say I," laughed father, and he carried her on into the house.

THE BIRTHDAY PARTY

THE evening after Alice's party, Mr. and Mrs. Merrill held a long conference and as a result a surprise awaited Mary Jane when she came to the breakfast table the next morning.

"Do you know of anybody who has a birthday next week?" asked Mr. Merrill as he kissed her good morning.

"I do, and I'm five years old," replied Mary Jane, "and that's pretty old!"

"Goodness! I should say it was!" exclaimed Mr. Merrill. "It's so old I can hardly imagine it. And I think, Mrs. Merrill, something ought to be done about it." As he looked solemnly across the table at his

wife, his eyes twinkled merrily and Mary Jane knew by their look that something nice was coming.

"I'm sure I don't know anything to do about it," began Mrs. Merrill (and Mary Jane noticed that her eyes twinkled too) "unless, perhaps, we might have a party?"

"A party?" exclaimed Mary Jane, "a PARTY? A really for sure enough party all just for me?"

"That is, of course, if you want one," added mother doubtfully.

"Oh, mother," cried Mary Jane and slipping down from her chair she gave first her mother and then her father a big "bear" hug, "of *course* I want one! May I have it on my birthday?"

"To be sure," laughed Mrs. Merrill. "When else would a body have a birthday

party? Now you eat all your oatmeal like a good little girl and then you help all you know how with the morning work and then we'll go down town and buy some pretty invitations and favors."

Never did oatmeal vanish as quickly as did Mary Jane's bowlful on that morning! And never did a little girl help so well with beds and bathroom—really Mrs. Merrill hadn't guessed that a nearly-five-year-old could do so much. So it wasn't quite ten o'clock yet when they made ready to go down town.

"I'll be down in just a minute, dear," said Mrs. Merrill when Mary Jane was all ready. "You run along and wait for me at the front porch."

Mary Jane walked down the stairs very slowly, and out onto the porch, and out onto

the steps, but still mother hadn't come. So, as she didn't want to sit down and muss up her dress, she decided to walk once around the house rather than wait on the porch. She walked past the hydrangea bed, past the blooming bridal wreath and as far as the rose bed. And there she stopped in amazement. For right there on the first bush, where it might easily have been seen these many days by ice man, grocery man or any one who passed, hung mother's handsome butterfly pin! Mary Jane was so surprised she didn't even touch the pin, she stood there and screamed.

Mrs. Merrill looked out of the window overhead and asked what the matter was.

"Come quick!" called Mary Jane. "Do come quick!"

Mrs. Merrill, too frightened to ask ques-

tions, hurried down the stairs and out into the yard and—well, she was as much surprised as Mary Jane was when she saw her pin hanging there on the bush. She grabbed it quickly as though she was afraid it would vanish before her eyes and then she threw her arms around Mary Jane.

"You dear child!" she exclaimed in a shaky voice. "I never thought of looking there! The pin must have still been on the dresser cover when I shook it out of the window and I was in such a hurry I didn't notice. I'm glad you have such bright eyes. Now you wait one minute more and I'll put this safely away and then we'll go down town."

Such fun as they did have down town! They bought pretty little invitations with a picture of a little girl with a pink parasol in one corner; they bought cracker bonbons

with pink frills outside and folded up paper baskets inside and they bought gorgeous big paper hats in all the gay colors.

And then, when they got home, they wrote invitations to five little boys and to four little girls, Mary Jane was the fifth little girl, you see. And then they began making things for the party. Alice made a game to be played with paper balls; father drew a big teddy bear on a sheet and mother made a big black nose for him, a nose that little folks, with their eyes blindfolded, were to try to pin on in the right place. And Amanda planned cookies and cake and candy. Never was there such a party for it was Mary Jane's first, you see.

At last the birthday came (Mary Jane had begun to fear it never would for the days seemed three weeks long, every one) and the

house was set in order and the time came to dress. Mary Jane was to wear her brand new dress with the pink sash, a new one that her grandmother had sent on purpose for the party; and her new white shoes that father had given her and her new silk stockings that her great-grandmother had sent. She felt very old, and grand, and grown-up when she walked dignifiedly down the stairs and into the living room. She had looked in the glass most carefully and the glass had told her that she looked just as nice as any little girl could and quite grown-up too.

She stood just inside the living room door and her heart beat quickly when Amanda went to answer the first ring at the front door —just think the wonderful party was beginning!

Junior came first, naturally, because he

lived nearest and Mary Jane noticed that his pocket bulged in a most curious fashion.

"Of course you didn't have to bring me a present," she said calmly, "but if you did, why don't you give it to me right away now, so it don't muss up your pocket?"

Junior, who had been puzzling all the way across the street about how he was to give Mary Jane that present, was greatly relieved to have the matter so easily settled. He pulled out the be-ribboned package and eyed it carefully while Mary Jane undid it and exclaimed over the beautiful new party coat for Marie Georgiannamore. Mary Jane scampered back upstairs to get the forgotten doll and the two children, and the others who began dropping in were so busy dressing the dolls that they quite forgot

There's no need to tell of all the good times at that party.

"company" manners and had a good time from the start.

There's no need to tell of all the good times at that party; of all the games and the fun; the scramble into the ten chairs at the candle lighted table in the dining room; of the sandwiches which disappeared so quickly; the ice cream in the shape of circus men; the big white cake with its five pink candles and one white one in the middle to grow on —you know all about that yourself because you've been to parties and know what fun they are.

When all the goodies were eaten up; when not a child could have eaten another bite had the table been full again, Mrs. Merrill passed around the paper bag favors and each guest put the candy he couldn't eat and the nuts and the paper caps and the flower fa-

vors and a piece of the birthday cake into his or her bag and then each bag was laid carefully by each little guest's hat and coat ready to take home. And then the five little girls and the five little boys slipped down from their chairs and ran out of doors for a final romp.

It was a tired little girl that Mrs. Merrill tucked into bed that night—but a very happy one. "I do think parties is the nicest things," she said with a satisfied sigh; "they's the nicest things I know!"

Mrs. Merrill smiled and kissed Mary Jane good night. Mary Jane had had quite enough excitement for one day so she said not a word about another surprise that she knew was coming—a surprise that *might* prove to be even more fun than a party!

A LETTER AND A TRIP

MARY JANE slept late on the morning after the party. By the time she was awake enough to realize that another day had come, she discovered that she was alone upstairs. She ran to the top of the stairs and looked over the railing. No one was in the hall and sounds from the dining room told her that the family was at breakfast.

"I'll just surprise them," she said to herself, "and show them how much a big girl like me can do." She ran back into her room and put on her slippers and her kimono; she went into the bathroom and washed her hands and face and brushed her teeth and then she slipped soundlessly down the stairs.

At the door of the dining room she stopped to get a good breath with which to say "Boo-o-o-o!" and as she took her breath she heard her father say, "Well, if you really think it's all right for her to go—five years old seems pretty young to me for such a trip."

"Of course it would be if she went alone—I wouldn't even think of that!" answered Mrs. Merrill's voice, "but with Dr. Smith to look after her and Alice coming as soon as school is out—I believe it will do the child good."

"So do I," exclaimed Mary Jane, darting into the room, the "booo" quite forgotten.

"Now, you'll have to tell her," laughed father, "and of course she won't want to go.

"Of course I will," laughed Mary Jane gayly. "Where am I going, mother?"

"Do you think you are old enough to go visit your great-grandmother Hodges all by yourself?" asked mother.

"With my own trunk and my own ticket and my own pocket book and my own conductor?" demanded Mary Jane, who could hardly believe what she heard.

"With your own trunk and pocket book," said Mrs. Merrill, "but I don't know about the ticket and the conductor because Dr. Smith is coming again and he will take you back with him if we will let you go and trust him to look after you on the journey. Do you think you'd like to go?"

"I don't think it, I know it!" cried Mary Jane, and she danced around the table with her kimono flying out behind her. "Can I go to-day?"

"Hardly!" laughed Mrs. Merrill. "We

have to buy you some strong shoes for the country and make you some rompers to play with the chickens in and pack your trunk and, oh, a lot of things before you can go."

"Well, a lot of things won't take very long because I'll help," said Mary Jane eagerly, "see? I'll climb right up and eat my oatmeal without you telling me to—that's how I'll help."

Mr. and Mrs. Merrill both laughed and Mr. Merrill, as he rose from the table, said, "If you will eat your breakfast, just as you know you should, every morning while you are gone, I really think I'll let you go." (For, you see, Mary Jane hadn't ever liked her oatmeal.) And when Mary Jane promised solemnly that she would, he said it was all settled.

Such fun as there was after that! Alice

and Mrs. Merrill sat at the table long after father left for work and they planned out just how many weeks it was till Alice could go to the country too, and how many weeks there were after that till Mr. and Mrs. Merrill could come for his vacation and how many rompers Mary Jane ought to have and how many pairs of shoes and rubbers and how big a sun hat Mary Jane needed. And then, after Alice had gone to school, Mary Jane helped her mother with the morning work so they got off very early for down town and the shopping.

And that evening, when father got home, he carried the steamer trunk down from the attic and Mary Jane began packing.

By noon of the next day, she had the trunk so full of dolls and doll clothes and teddy bears and books that it couldn't possibly shut

and she hadn't put in it one single thing to wear—not a single thing!

"You seem to think that there isn't going to be anything to play with in the country," said Mr. Merrill when Mary Jane showed him her morning's work. "Must you take all your city things? I should think you would leave those here and play with grandmother's things while you are at her house."

"Will she have anything for a little girl?" asked Mary Jane in surprise.

"If she hasn't, you come right back home," laughed father, "but I don't worry about that. I think she has more than you'll need."

So after lunch Mary Jane took all the playthings and the dolls out of the trunk and put them neatly into the closet and that was much better for then there was plenty of

room in the trunk for clothes and for two mysterious packages which Mary Jane saw her mother put in the very bottom. And it was a good thing that she put everything away so nicely for at three o'clock Dr. Smith telephoned that he was unexpectedly called home and could Mary Jane go home with him that very night?

Mr. Merrill was phoned to and he said he would tend to the ticket and the trunk check. Mrs. Merrill packed the trunk and Alice, who happened home from school in just the nick of time, bathed and dressed Mary Jane for the train. So that by the time Dr. Smith came out to dine with them the trunk was packed and gone, the little traveler was dressed and everything about the house was back in apple pie order.

Mary Jane was so excited she could hardly

eat a bit of dinner but Dr. Smith said it wouldn't matter so much because she could have some good fresh eggs and two glasses of milk and some of Grandmother Hodges' corn bread for breakfast.

It's pretty exciting to go off on the train at night and leave your father and mother and sister. Mary Jane found that out; and she got a queer lump in her throat on the way to the station. A lump that for some reason or other grew bigger and bigger when father held her snugly as he lifted her out of the car and that nearly made her cry when mother held tight onto her hand as they went through the station.

But fortunately the train came in just then and with the seeing that the trunk was really put on and kissing folks good-by and

sending a message to Doris and meeting the big jolly conductor and giving her hand bag to the porter and laughing at Dr. Smith's funny jokes and all that—the lump didn't get as troublesome as Mary Jane had feared it would. She got into her section in time to wave good-by to the three on the platform as the train pulled out and then, before she had a chance to feel lonesome, Dr. Smith said, "Did you ever see them work a bed on a train?"

"Work a bed?" asked Mary Jane. "What's that?"

"Make up a bed, I mean," laughed Dr. Smith. "Did you ever see how the bed works when it is made up? Here, Sambo," and the doctor held his hand high and motioned to the porter, "this little girl wants

to know how she's going to sleep, she doesn't see any bed."

"She'll see in a minute, sir, jest a littl' minute," said the good natured porter and he slipped off his blue coat; put on a white one; took down part of the ceiling and, right before Mary Jane's astonished eyes, made up a bed. Mary Jane thought it was most amazing. She watched every move he made and decided that when she grew up she was going to be a bed maker on a train because it was so much more fun than making beds at home.

When the bed was all ready, Dr. Smith helped her take off her shoes and tuck them into a little hammock that hung over the window; then he unbuttoned her dress and helped her climb into her berth bed. Mary Jane took off her dress, hung it on the rack

just as her mother had told her to do and settled herself comfy for the night. But suddenly she remembered that she hadn't told the kind Dr. Smith "good night." She fumbled with the curtains till she got a crack open and through that she stuck her curly head.

"Good night, Dr. Smith," she said when she spied him sitting close by, across the aisle, "I'm glad I'm going with you and I like sleeping on a train and I'm *very* glad that you live next door to my dear great-grandmother."

"I'm glad too," replied the doctor. "Now you go straight to sleep, little lady, so you will have roses in your cheeks when you get to grandmother's in the morning."

And if you want to know of all the fun and

good times that Mary Jane had with the pigs and horses and chickens and strawberries she found at her great-grandmother's house, you'll have to read—

"MARY JANE—HER VISIT."

M. Coughlin